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AGAINST WIND AND TIDE.

BY HOLME LEE,

AUTHOR OF "SYLVAN HOLT'S DAUGHTER," "KATHIE BRANDE,"
ETC. ETC.

"Are these things then necessities?
Then let us meet them like necessities."
SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CONTENTS

OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



PART FIRST.

SETTING SAIL.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE TWIN BROTHERS	3
II. THEIR MOTHER	42
III. AT MESSRS. HAWTHORNE AND Co.'s	96
IV. KINGSFOLK AND FRIENDS	145

PART SECOND.

ON THE DEEP WATERS.

I. FAIR WINDS	211
II. EBB AND FLOW	251

1

1

1

1

1

1

PART FIRST.

Setting Sail.

"THERE is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased,
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim of the main chance of things
As not yet come to life; which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie entreaured.
Such things become the brood and hatch of time."
SHAKSPEARE, *King Henry IV.*

AGAINST WIND AND TIDE.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

"I REMEMBER the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the school-boy's brain;
The song and the s'ence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on and is never still:
A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."
LONGFELLOW.

I.

"CYRUS HAWTHORNE!"

Cyrus did not respond to his name; he was not in his place.

"Robert, where is your brother?"

Robert made no answer, but he looked red and uneasy.

"Playing truant again, I suppose," said the schoolmaster, and went on calling over the roll.

He had played truant himself when he was a boy, and remembered the sweetness of stolen delights,—also, he remembered the penalty,—also, he was in the habit of exacting it in full from the present generation of delinquents who transgressed his rules. He therefore straightened his cane and laid it handy across his desk, while Robert noted the familiar, ominous preparations and shuddered. It was a parody on Justice whetting her sword. Cyrus was a favourite with the master, but favour did not blunt the edge of the inevitable stroke; the lad's palm was well acquainted with the sting of a *hander*, and his idle shoulders had writhed many a time under a vigorous lacing from the supple cane. King Solomon's precept was in high authority at this date, and in full practice also; but even as with young Rehoboam, it proved a failure with Cyrus Hawthorne. There are some vices that cannot be beaten out of a boy, and Cyrus's tendency to play truant on sunshiny mornings was one of these ingrain vices.

The master was a tall, slender, and stooping

man, with a grave blue eye and a wholesome winter-apple red in his face. He was a north-country man, a personage of intelligence and simplicity, who had drifted into the island nobody exactly knew how or why, and settled himself down at Chinelyn as village pedagogue. He was quite by himself in the cottage, but no neat-handed wife or daughter could have kept it in fairer order. The low-browed, whitewashed schoolroom, with its hacked desks and benches, its slates on the walls and ink-splashes on the floor, was now filled to its remotest corner with the pleasant sunshine, while the open doorway framed as lovely a vignette of spring as ever Nature tinted in her most poetic mood.

There were cherry-trees blossomed over with bridal white, and apple-trees full of a blushing bloom, hereafter to develope into a rosy-cheeked harvest of temptation. Down the narrow box-edged borders to the gate were tall white and purple stocks, rich amber and ruby wallflowers, crimson double-daisies, and sweet prickly briar, which gave out a luscious harmony of scent. Early May though it was, there were a few pink

buds of roses opening on the schoolhouse front, and the sweet myrtle, which grew up to the thatch and over it, was putting forth its new red leaflets to replace its last year's faded robe of dark green verdure. Under the eaves and amidst the fragrant branches the birds whistled, chirruped, twittered, sang, as if the music of spring overflowed from their little hearts. High up in the elm-tree tops, bare of leaf as yet, the life was beginning to stir as the soft wind whispered that May-time was come; and down below upon the shore the waves crept over the sands with the gentle murmur of a caress.

The master himself might have been forgiven if he had played truant on such a sunshiny, tempting morning. Indeed, what was it but the truant spirit trifling round about his imagination that drew him from his desk to the open doorway, from the doorway to the garden-gate, and through the garden-gate into the sandy lane?

That beguiling sandy lane! It first went up a very steep rise, and then dipped down capriciously into a sudden hollow, with high, hedge-crowned banks on either side. It had been a river-bed

in primeval times, and the windings of the waters could still be traced between two caved and broken banks (continuations of those that shut in the sandy lane) across the beautiful meadows into which it led. The master's grey pate was uncovered, and the sunshine warmed him both to heart and brain. Poor, frozen, solitary old bachelor! what wonder that he coveted to enjoy it a little longer—that his step strayed on and on to the lane's end, and that there he lingered?

It was a lovely scene that spread itself before his idle gaze. There was a group of sleek, dappled cows feeding deliciously upon the new grass, who just turned their lazy heads, looked at him with benign eyes for a moment, and then resumed their feast. Peering above the woods were the tall, wreathed chimneys and steep roof of the Manor Farm, and spreading to the sun-dimmed verge of the horizon was the wide, blue expanse of an unruffled sea. Above all, there was a swelling knoll of golden furze, and planing over it was a hawk intent on some object couched amongst the brush. Who could resist that? Certainly not our schoolmaster, who had played

truant when he was a boy ! The hawk was stationary for some moments, then it shot down straight for a few yards, and paused again, as if preparing for its deadly pounce. It had a cruel, sanguinary expression against the cloudless blue ; it was the one discord in that Paradise-morning, and the schoolmaster shouted to scare it away. It sailed heavily off, and at the same moment several birds flew out of the furze and winged their way to the woods ; but of all that the master's voice had startled, it had startled nothing so much as himself. He set off up the sandy lane as fast as his feet would carry him.

And what a charivari there was in the school when he arrived there ! He was a humourist in his way, and could not forbear hiding a minute or two behind the hedge to watch and listen to what was going forward. The first thing he saw was his favourite—that incorrigible reprobate, Cyrus Hawthorne—seated on his own high stool, his silver spectacles mounted on nose, wielding the awful cane, and mouthing out a queer parody of one of his own lectures to bad boys—the master was rather given to prolixity of remon-

stances before entering on flagellation. This was interrupted by a few distinct words in Robert's voice, words of judicious warning and reproof, to which Cyrus responded defiantly—

“Isn't master playing truant himself? I passed him within a yard or two watching a hawk over Fusmount, and he never saw me. He ought to have a *hander* as well as us if he stays out, that he ought.”

This daring assertion was received with an affirmative shout of applause, and then followed the swish of the cane through the air, as if Cyrus were inflicting condign punishment on a shadow. The master was a just man and benevolent—besides, was he not delinquent more than any? So, instead of stealing in upon his flock unawares, he coughed hoarsely, made a difficulty with the latch of the gate, and marched up the pathway with slow deliberation.

Ah! what a studious silence, what a beautiful application, reigned amongst all those promising young scholars as his bent figure darkened the sunshine in the doorway! Every nose was pointed down at every slate or book, and every brow wore

a calculating frown; you would have said their very hearts were in their tasks. The master stepped to his desk without a word, and cast a shrewd glance all round upon the young hypocrites. It was an interesting picture, and he forbore to disturb its harmonious completeness; he even chose to be blind to the inquisitorial twinkle which now and then shot out towards his countenance from the eye-corner of some scapegrace a degree bolder than the rest, and the presence of the truant, now peacefully seated beside his twin brother, he quite ignored.

II.

Amongst all those common-place mean or rustic countenances it was rather strange to see two such beautiful heads as the young Hawthornes'. Robert's fair, blond curls, which maturity would darken, his blue eyes, clear, calm, and full, and rich grave lips, his healthy bloom and brown of complexion, made up a visage to which the eye of affection, and its heart too, could turn and turn

again with a feeling of repose and dependableness, such as the more striking, and, perhaps, more intellectual face of his brother Cyrus was not calculated to inspire.

Yet Cyrus was generally the greater favourite of the two. His ardent temperament gave a quickness and warmth to his feelings such as were not prominent in Robert's slower and deeper character. His brain, equally vigorous, was more brilliant in conception, and would hereafter be more distinct in utterance, and so much the more powerful as genius is more powerful than talent; but to these spiritual graces, to which the world, as with one consent, accords its homage, were united dangerous faults of temper and disposition such as have ere now made wreck of the finest parts.

If he was more vehement in his affections than Robert, he was also more fickle and capricious; his generosity was an impulse; his judgment was weakened by levity, rashness, indiscretion, petulance; his predilections and antipathies were generally violent and uncertain; he had a thorn of jealous vanity always stinging him in presence of another's superiority; and in everything he was

wilful, headstrong, and exacting. These latter qualities showed themselves nowhere more frequently than in his dealings with his brother. The bond of love between them was strong with that peculiar strength which always appears to unite children of one birth; but as, even there, equality never subsists, the earlier developed character of Cyrus dominated that of his brother. To see them sitting side by side at their desk now was sufficient illustration of this. Robert, who was considerably the taller and the broader of the two, cramped his arms close to his body that Cyrus might have the more room to fling his abroad; which he did with an indolent ease and grace, expressive enough of his self-crowned kingship. There were half-a-dozen boys there physically capable of beating him to a mummy, but there was that sense of repressed power in his air which always served him as shield and buckler; his reputation lay, not so much in what he had done, as in what he was conceived capable of doing, and the elements of fear and admiration entered largely into that universal liking which he attracted and drew to himself.

Robert had his friends too, but they felt him more as one of themselves than Cyrus. Nobody was afraid of him,—nobody, that is, unless there were a question of a combat with him as opponent, for there were not many who cared to stand up before that young lion when he was roused and angry. He had homely, every-day qualities about him, such as simplicity, truth, faithfulness, and fortitude, that gave an idea of calm, resolute strength; you might lean upon him, and he would not give way; trust him, and he would be silent as the grave; love him, and he would love you without any jealous exaction or weak passionate harassment, such as Cyrus inflicted upon his often-changed friends. If the future of either was to be mainly influenced by his own peculiar idiosyncrasy—and who can doubt that our lives are all so influenced?—it were easy to prewise that Cyrus would create for himself many a mortification, many a stumbling-block, and that he would wring his cruellest pangs out of his own heart; and it were also easy to see that Robert's troubles would come to him from without, from the hand of God, not from the bitter broadcast seed of passion and

wrong-doing, which Cyrus might have to gather in when the time of harvest came.

For their age—they were drawing on to twelve years old—their distinctive traits were very strongly marked. It was time, and more than time, that they were removed from the village school and the tuition of Master Scrope; but their grandfather was penurious of temper, and evaded every proposal that might lead to expense. He had already decided on the line of life each was to pursue. Cyrus he designed to keep as his own helper and ultimate successor on the Manor Farm, which the Hawthornes had tenanted from generation to generation; Robert was to be sent out of the island to his great-uncle's manufactory of paint and varnish at Walton Minster, and to be duly initiated into its mysteries with a view to carrying it on when his relative should retire from it. With such prospects in view, their grandfather argued, sensibly enough, that a highly polished education was not needed; and as Master Scrope made them good readers, writers, and accountants, he declared that no further instructor should they have.

Those were not the days of universal knowledge, when everybody was taught everything, and the young Hawthornes were not sensible of any very grievous deprivation. If their mother, Mary, in looking at her beautiful boys, sometimes felt ambitious for them—as what mother's heart does not feel for her darlings?—she battled the proud impulse down and held her peace: what had *she*, what had they, to do with pride, ambition, and rising in the world—they of all the boys in Chinelyn, whose very existence there was imputed to her for an indelible disgrace?

Having said thus much in this place, we must say a little more.

III.

Time was when Mary Hawthorne was not only the most beautiful, but also the blithest and happiest maiden in the parish; she was a handsome woman still, and a remarkable looking woman, but it needed nothing deeper than the casual glance to trace the footmarks of the anguish that had gone over her soul. She had been a pious good girl too, and

that made her misfortunes all the crueller, and, in her own mind, all the more rankling and indelible. But she had no taint of wilful sin chargeable upon her; *that* even the most censorious and jealous of those who had envied and hated her for her temporary exaltation were ready to admit.

When she was about sixteen there was one night a yacht run aground on the rocky beach below Chinelyn, and in reaching the shore a gentleman, the owner of the skiff, received more than one severe injury which necessitated his immediate removal to some quiet dwelling where he could be comfortably nursed and attended upon. At this date there was no such place at Chinelyn, and Simon Hawthorne gave a reluctant consent to his being carried up to the Manor Farm.

The stranger became known in the village as Sir Philip Nugent, and long after he had regained convalescence he lingered in the neighbourhood, or, if he left it, he always returned at the end of two or three days, until, at last, a wonderful rumour went abroad—a rumour which the event authenticated very speedily.

One morning Mary Hawthorne was seen driving

away from Chinelyn in a handsome carriage with Sir Philip Nugent by her side. She had been married to him that day by the parish priest at the altar of the parish church, and bitter-tongued scandal had not a word to say. Beautiful Mary was no longer a simple village maiden; she was my Lady Nugent, wife of a gentleman as handsome as ever stepped, mistress of houses and lands, men-servants and maid-servants, and of more luxuries than the exaggerated rustic imagination could conceive.

Many months—nearly a year—went over, and still Simon Hawthorne held up his head and spoke proudly of Mary—"My daughter Mary, Lady Nugent, who is travelling abroad with her husband,"—until one bitter March night, when a frozen north-east wind was whistling over the downs, there came a low tremulous knock at the door of the Manor Farm, and when Simon hurried to open it, his child stood outside alone.

"Take me in, dear father!" cried she, and fell, half fainting, upon his breast.

It is a piteous story, but it has been told often before. She had been cruelly deceived; she was

about to become a mother, but she was no wife. Sir Philip Nugent had been previously married to a foreign lady, from whom he was judicially separated, but who was still alive. Mary had extracted this confession from his own reluctant lips, and evading his watchfulness, she made her escape and fled from him to her father's protection. He pursued her; he tried to win her back; he offered to make upon her and her offspring any settlement she chose to demand; but Mary, strong in her purity of spirit, however weak she might be in her love, refused ever to look upon his face again; and old Simon Hawthorne flung back his lavish proffers of money in his teeth. I shall not attempt to make Sir Philip Nugent's apology. That he had been ill-used himself was no plea for inveigling Mary by such a base deception as he had practised on her innocence. Still less can his passionate love be admitted in excuse. He departed in anger, and returned abroad, to chafe over his loss and disappointment; and while Mary's shame and misery were still new to her, her twin boys struggled into the world. She had them baptized by the names of Cyrus

and Robert Hawthorne, and the villagers resumed calling her also by her father's name.

Since then twelve long years had gone over her head—years how woful, how weary, with vain longing and vain sorrow none but her Father in Heaven will ever know! They had given to her countenance the refinement of a suffering unmerited, a holy, a tender beauty, far beyond the fatal loveliness of her youth. Surely one could not look up so long and so faithfully to the throne of mercy without, like her, winning somewhat of angel grace and angel fairness too!

The father of the boys still lived, but Mary was never known to mention him, though Cyrus could scarcely come before her eyes without vividly recalling not only his features and general air, but also his simplest gestures, and the very tones of his voice. Perhaps this was the subtle reason why her heart clave to him with greater tenderness than to his brother, though she thought it was because he showed a more eager and exacting love for her. I would willingly evade all further allusion to the man who had done her such grievous wrong, but if their story is to be faith-

fully told, that would be impossible. Mary's children inherited from him too much for their paternity ever to be ignored: Cyrus was his literal copy, personally, mentally, and morally; and though Robert took of his mother's inner character and expression, he also had the noble visage, the high courage, the strong sound brain, that were hereditary in the family from which Sir Philip Nugent sprang. Without having any knowledge of the actual truth, the boys were intuitively sensible of a difference between themselves and their associates. Neither was ever guilty of a lie, a meanness, a cowardice; but this moral rectitude might be the graft of their mother's good teaching; for if they were children of sorrow, they were also children of many prayers.

Cyrus, like most boys of lively imagination, was a day dreamer. In his vanity he loved to identify himself with all histories of princes in disguise, or wrongfully dispossessed heirs; and long before Robert awoke to any idea of romance as attached to himself, his brother had woven a tissue of complicated adventures which invariably terminated with glorious triumph to them both. He had

reticence enough to keep these visions to himself, but Mary more than suspected them, and looked forward with shrinking dread to the hour when she must take the boys into the secret of her heart, and tell them all the truth concerning themselves and her own mournful motherhood.

IV,

Though old Simon Hawthorne might, in his own mind, destine Cyrus to the quiet, eventless, pastoral life, the lad would never follow it; and he had confided as much to Master Scrope, who kept his counsel faithfully, because he sympathized with him. The schoolmaster recognised in him that genius which none other—not even Mary—did, and he had a sublime respect for it. He was one of those who allow to genius a moral, or *immoral*, licence such as they will accord neither to passion, temptation, weakness, nor ignorance. He would say that genius was not amenable to ordinary rules or codes of law, yet he did not grant to Cyrus a *practical* exemption from his own regula-

tions ; in which he differed not from many amongst ourselves, who find it a hard task to fit our acts to our theory ; a sentiment of justice interfered with him, as indolence, caprice, or selfishness may interfere with us.

Close beside the master's desk there were three hanging shelves of books, not school-books, dull and dreary, but play books, poetry books, romances, travels, biographies of learned and famous men, and a few scientific works, not attractively illustrated as are our popular editions nowadays, but plain and solid both inside and out. The young Hawthornes had free access to these shelves, and when lessons were over for the morning and the other lads gone out, they marched straight up to them, and grasped a favourite volume each. They were not permitted to carry the books home, for they were Master Scrope's only wealth, and he set especial store by them ; so they had a custom of seating themselves on the school-door step in the sunshine, and reading there until the clock in the corner warned them home to dinner.

While they were thus employed, the master

strode between them into the garden to cut a salad for his midday repast, dressed it after a fashion of his own with a hard-boiled egg of his speckled hen's laying, and then ate it with a hunch of coarse brown bread which he had kneaded and baked himself. It was lucky for poor old Master Scrope that, with his northern breeding, he had imbibed a natural turn for economy; else, instead of bread and lettuce with contentment, he must have had emptiness and sorrow for his dinner often. Education was not at a premium amongst the rising generation at Chinelyn, and it must be allowed that the master was in no danger of growing too plump on his penny-a-week vocation. Cyrus had seen the frugal shape and substance of the old man's dinner too often to have his attention distracted thereby from his book now, and he pored steadily on until Master Scrope touched him on the shoulder after thrice repeating the same question: "Where did you go this morning, Cyrus, instead of coming to school?" Then indolently lifting his eyes from the attractive page, but without detaching his thoughts from it, he replied,

"I went down on the shore to see the boats come in;" after a moment's pause he added, with a touch of audacity in his voice and a significant glimmer in his dark eyes, "I came up by Fusmount and saw that hawk—you know." The master smiled:

"I was playing truant too, even an old man tires of being wise every day, and all day," said he.

This sentiment caused Robert to look up. "I wish you would give us a holiday this afternoon, master; I want to go through the landslip, and it is just the weather, neither too sultry, nor too windy, nor too anything, but just right," was his plea.

"Why don't you *take* holiday?" whispered Cyrus, with a mischievous, defiant glance at the master, who feigned neither to hear nor see. He was never the pedagogue out of school; from which it may be safely inferred, that he was not heartily in love with his vocation; for there is none other that sticks so adhesively as that, if it ever succeed in pervading the affections and habits.

To make the master's confession for him once for all, let us say that he regarded himself as

a fine actor spoilt; a noble tragedian cast away on the barren intelligences of an obscure village; a great artist, doomed by adverse fate to waste his talent on a primer and a cane! Which of us has *not* railed at Fortune more or less, for pushing us off the stage where we hoped to play a part and win distinction, and resolutely handing us into another theatre where the *rôles* are all strange and distasteful to us? What cares she, imperious jade! Not a sous! She portions our task, and pins us down to it spite of our yea or nay! I protest this world seems to me often a game of the most wilful cross purposes! There's one whose natural mind goes clad in motley, and whose outward husk drapes itself in a high tragedy robe; there's another, with dust and ashes powdering his fool's cap and bells, and sackcloth instead of juggler's fleshings; there's another of port grand, grave, and serious, that every idle spite makes a mock at, as if dignity were a mere ninepin set up for ill-luck to bowl down into the mire! When I see one of these unhappy travesties I can never help falling into the moralist's parenthetical view.

There was a warm, yellow, noonday sunshine steeping the three figures in the schoolroom doorway. The master had his dish of salad on the end of the desk, and ate it meditatively and slowly; he possessed a smattering of classical knowledge, and could season his dinner of herbs with recollections of great men, who, in their adversity, had fared no more sumptuously than he, and doubtless he did so season it. His rusty black figure, his long grey hair, his bony, placid face, and frosty eye, might have served as a model of a village philosopher. There also, to complete the picture, were his young disciples at his feet; the passionate enthusiast, whose way would be one season a luxuriant flowery land, and the next a thorny wilderness; and the patient learner who would put by in his heart every lesson that experience might teach him, and would guide himself after the everlasting beacon of the Cross in the sky, until he could fold his sails and cast anchor in the still waters of the fair heavenly haven.

Master Scrope had not the gift of the second sight, but he had a shrewd discernment, a clear perception, of the finer traits of human nature and

individual character ; and as he sat contemplating the two youthful heads, he might have prophesied the main features of the lads' lives within a line or two of the truth. There was the repose of quiet strength in Robert's attitude, a grave clearness in his countenance ; but in Cyrus's mobile features there was the latent fire, the pre-anxious, melancholy expression, which physiognomists have professed to trace even in the portraits of those foredoomed to do and suffer much. His variable spirit passed in smile and gloom over his face, like light and cloud over the sky ; as distinct to see, as easy to interpret ; amongst his weaknesses and his errors, he was rarely a dissembler ; he betrayed himself at his best and at his worst at once.

The book he was now reading was an old brown volume, entitled a "History of the Stage." It introduced him first to the cart of Thespis, and then carried him swiftly down through the dark ages to the days of monkish mysteries and moralities ; to the days of Shakspeare, and Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Congreve, Farquhar, Dryden, and the rest of them. In its

pages he made acquaintance with fair Kitty Clive, with Mistress Eleanor Gwynne, Mistress Woffington and others—their contemporaries; but there was no mention of the three then celebrities—Kemble, Siddons, and Kean—the book was before their reign, in fact.

Immature genius has generally the trick of imitation strong, so, whatever interested Cyrus became, for the nonce, the foundation of his day dreams. When he heard or read about great actors, one half-hour he was treading the stage with tragic power, and drawing tears from every eye as maddened Lear; the next he was convulsing his audience in some broad farcical part, and again he was causing young hearts to beat warm and fast as he made love to Juliet—an impassioned Romeo. His imagination did not always bind him to achieve success. Sometimes he would heroically support persecution prompted by envious rivals; he was great *there*; full of dignity and fortitude; he would even let himself be conquered, and then what did he do? I am sorry to say he *died*: when he ceased to enthral he always died! A dreary after-time of

obscurity never dropped upon him and left him to fade out of remembrance: shouts of applause or yells of jealous hatred heralded him to a grave, which men's loving, repentant tears were to keep ever green. If, in books, he went down to the sea in ships, he was the navigator who discovered new worlds; if he marched with an army, he was the general who conquered kingdoms; if he was the sage in his closet, art and science were for ever indebted to him; and the conclusion was always the same — a shrine of immortal honour visited by pilgrim feet from generation to generation.

An analysis of Robert's character would not show any such wildly egotistical aspirations. Therein was a deep, tender love for his mother, a sentiment that pervaded all his nature, a quiet enthusiasm for things beautiful and true, a serviceable energy and a persistent power of work; but he never fancied himself a hero to anybody, and he was certainly not a hero to himself. His volume was one that Cyrus would have called *dry*; it was a geological work, and the subject was not treated in a lively manner, but

it was *real*, and therefore he liked it. Hugh Miller had not penned his picturesque stories of the Old World, or tracked the footprints of the Creator through it, when Robert Hawthorne was a boy, else he would have made another fervent young disciple of nature. Master Scrope had recently taken to the study, under the impression that he had had enough of men and women, and should find stones more interesting and satisfactory; but he never acknowledged to having done so. Indeed, on one occasion when Mr. Ford, the parish priest of Chinelyn, ventured to impugn the character of some of the books upon his shelves, he was excited to reply with almost disrespectful warmth; and there afterwards appeared in the "Banner of Freedom," a slightly revolutionary paper edited by a Scotch cousin of his, an article on literature, containing the following tirade *à propos* of Mr. Ford's remarks:

"The poet, novelist, and playwright study human nature, and try to compel its secrets from it. They see or strive to see how it is wrought upon by the powers of heaven, earth, and hell. I uphold that this study is a

nobler one than your geologist's, who goes about chipping stones and grubbing amongst the cast-off sloughs of this old serpent the world; it is nobler than your botanist's rage for compassing land and sea to find a new weed; than your entomologist's rejoicing over a strange beetle, and naming it vaingloriously after himself! The climax of the whole universe, the Creator's masterpiece, is the heart of man! Where else is there such infinite variety, complication, versatility? Answer me that, irreverent blocks, who set what their Maker destined for king and ruler beneath the earth which was made for him to walk upon, the vegetables that cover its nakedness, and the creeping things that hide as he approaches!"

Assuredly Master Scrope was not born for a village schoolmaster!

V.

Cyrus Hawthorne unscrupulously availed himself of the advice that he had offered to the rejection of his more conscientious brother, and

took the half-holiday which the schoolmaster would not grant without inconveniencing himself by announcing his intentions. He directed his truant steps towards the Chine, through which he meant to descend to the beach, always his favourite resort.

The Chine was an immense rift into the body of the earth, at the bottom of which rushed a narrow, but impetuous torrent; at its head, this torrent poured over a lofty slab of rock, and formed a miniature waterfall, whence the spray rose in glittering clouds. The sinuosities of the rift, which the rude steps and pathways were obliged to follow, perpetually disclosed lovely surprises in the scenery. For five minutes, Cyrus walked through a green gloom of overhanging verdure, almost as rich and various in its spring colouring as when the trees have put on their warmer autumnal robes. Then he crossed a frail plank bridge, thrown over the abyss, and found himself exposed to the full rays of the afternoon sunshine between two earthy cliffs, all bare and black. A little farther, and as the Chine widened, the foliage became still richer and more luxuriant.

Through the branches of elms, beeches, chesnuts, and sycamores, the yellow light filtered down upon emerald grasses, with here and there a vivid patch of wild flowers, such as love a moist vaporous atmosphere. An occasional fruit tree, full of pink and white blossoms, and the bright dark leaves of a holly or laurel, still further diversified the hues of the picture, and looking upwards to the narrow band of sky which roofed the Chine, light, feathery branches of fir, of yew, of alder, and hazel, were seen waving against the blue. The cliffs near the water were clothed with a close, dark green, velvety lichen, and from many a cleft and crevice hung down long tendrils of the small vein-leaved ivy, and ribbon-like tassels of the glossy hart's tongue fern. Such a mellowness of warm light suffused the air, such a silence, except for the trickling music of the waterfall, and the lapping of the tide upon the shore, that Cyrus, ever open to impressions and beguilements of beauty, lingered there longer than his wont. There is a moral meaning and a moral influence in the varying scenes and seasons of earth, to which imaginative minds are peculiarly

susceptible, and as he idled through this wilderness of verdant beauty, his spirits rose to a wild exaltation, as if the youth of the spring and the youth in his veins ran with a swifter, warmer current in this budding May-time of the year than at any other.

On the eastern side of the Chine, near where its rivulet flowed out, and lost itself among the sea-sands, there was a little cottage perched aloft upon an elevated plateau, and almost buried in verdure, like a bird's nest in the branches of an elm. In this cottage lived two fishermen, named Brett—father and son—of no very good repute; for they were smugglers, when smuggling was a profession of risk and profit. From them, Cyrus Hawthorne, and Robert too, had heard many a wild tale of the sea, its perils, marvels, and fascinations; for the lads were favourites with the two fishermen, especially with the younger. As Cyrus came whistling down the steep path opposite the cottage, he saw the old man sitting outside the door, mending his nets in the sunshine, while his son stood a little way off on a prominence, which commanded the whole arc of

the bay. He had his glass in his hand, and was intently watching the movements of a sail upon the horizon.

"What craft is yon, Mark?" asked Cyrus, springing up the precipitous ascent, to the young man's side; "it is a fast sailer."

"Here, father, look you if you know it. It has been a long while a stranger in these waters, if it is what I take it to be," said Mark, handing the glass to the old man, who had dropped his task, and come hobbling towards him.

Brett himself seemed for a moment surprised or baffled, and when he lowered the glass after his examination, Mark asked if he had ever seen it before.

"Yes," was the brief reply, "and so have you, Mark. It is the 'Stormy Petrel,' sure enough."

The younger man turned a savage look seawards, and then walked away. Cyrus, in astonishment, inquired what was the matter with him.

"I told you once, my lad, that if you came about my place, there must be no questions, and no tellings of what you might see," replied Brett, curtly. "Do you want the glass yourself?"

Cyrus took it for a minute or two, but soon rendered it back, and ran down upon the shore while the old fisherman returned to his net-mending, and his son strode away to the top of the cliff to watch the strange sail. Cyrus entertained no virtuous horror of smugglers and smugglings, and in the idea that the "Stormy Petrel" was an inopportune member of the preventive service which would dispute his friend's method of importation for some time to come, he did not wish it any special good luck, but went on his way to a wild rocky point, where, at low water, it was his custom to seek for anemones and other strange things of the sea, such as were left in the deep pools, and clinging to the stones by the retiring tide. The beach at Chinelyn varied greatly from season to season; its cliffs of earth and sandstone were continually crumbling down or falling in heavy masses, which the action of the water, in process of time, hardened to the appearance of rock.

The wonders of the deep were the earliest inspiration of Cyrus's muse, and this afternoon, when he was tired of hunting for new specimens,

he clambered up the red cliffs to a point whence he had a glorious view over the bay, and as the white ships went and came in the distance, and the gulls skimmed the opalescent water lightly as foam flecks, he took out a little red pocket-book and began to write. He was not over difficult in the matters of rhyme and metre (nor always of reason either) at this date, but Mary fondly cherished all his verses, and thought them beautiful; she was a gentle critic, and his songs made music in her ears. How much of them was original, and how much was merely the reflection of other minds upon his, she never inquired. He was her poet-boy, the pride and delight of her heart, and if anybody had made her hear the voices of which his was only the echo, she would have said in her loving soul, if she did not speak it with her lips, that his had still the finer, purer, sweeter, loftier tone.

While Cyrus was absorbed in his composition, the vessel which had excited such visible annoyance in the younger Brett approached nearer in shore, and a boat containing two persons put off from it. His verses done, Cyrus descended from

his eerie, and turned his steps in the direction of the place where it would land its passenger. The tide was flowing in now, and brought the boat through the water so fast that when he reached the little pier of loose stones, Mark Brett was just casting out a rope to secure it. The elder fisherman had come down from mending his nets, and Robert also, school being out, had found his way to the beach in search of his brother. The two lads, in their idle, affectionate way, twined their arms round each other's neck, and stood watching, while a fine-looking gentleman stepped up upon the pier within half a dozen yards of them. His visage was brown and much lined, but it was a handsome face still, and of a singularly attractive expression. The boys looked at him with rustic admiration, but without obtrusiveness, until they perceived that he also was intently regarding them. He did not speak, but Mark Brett, following the direction of his gaze and seeing where it rested, said, significantly—

“Those two are Mistress Mary Hawthorne's boys,—twins, Sir Philip Nugent. I remember you, sir, of old.”

The stranger started to find himself thus abruptly recognised, but he approached the boys, who had retreated to a little distance, and exclaimed, while a glow of natural emotion suffused his face—

“Are you indeed Mary Hawthorne’s sons? Is she up at the Manor Farm still?”

The boys were silent; they felt rather than guessed in what relation this noble-looking gentleman stood towards them, and for a minute or two Cyrus was fool enough to imagine that his romantic day-dreams were coming true; by what prescience Robert divined the reality I cannot tell, but that he did divine it, and was stung to his heart’s core with shame, the burning crimson that dyed his face as his eyes and his father’s met betrayed. I have intimated elsewhere that Robert had more of his mother in his countenance than Cyrus; perhaps that shamed look of his reminded Sir Philip Nugent of some painful scene betwixt Mary and himself long ago. He stood a moment or two as if pondering what to do, but, at last, he made a sign to the boys that they should accompany him up the Chine, and

they obeyed. Cyrus was the least shy of the two, and though restless and disquieted, he kept beside the stranger all the way; but it was on Robert's shoulder that Sir Philip chose to lean his hand, and it was Robert's lineaments that he perused with the most affectionate interest. He asked many questions about their mother, assiduously striving to veil his anxiety under a pretence of simple friendship; he asked about their grandfather and about their own bringing up, but all was left to Cyrus to answer. Robert's calm nature was stirred to its depths; when he would have spoken, a strangling sensation in his throat stifled the words; it was an agony of shame and torture that the lad underwent during that short walk. When they reached the Chine head, Sir Philip Nugent paused.

"You are going home to your mother now, are you not?" he said.

Cyrus replied that they were.

"Say nothing of having met any stranger here; you will see me at the Manor Farm ere long; till then be silent."

He did not wait for a promise, neither did they

offer to give one, and they parted at once; Sir Philip Nugent taking the road into the village, and the boys turning homewards.

“What does it mean, Robin?” Cyrus asked confusedly, as they went slowly across the fields; “who is that gentleman?”

“Cannot you feel, Cyrus? you are quite like him in the face,” was the reluctant answer.

Cyrus coloured and glanced uneasily at his brother. It was some time before either spoke again, but when they got into the Manor garden amongst the shady trees, an exciting discussion commenced between them—a discussion which, I am afraid, left poor, passionate, poetical Cyrus but very little of his magnificent day-dreams remaining.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

THEIR MOTHER.

"I HAVE lingered by the past,
As by a death-bed, with unwonted love,
And such forgiveness as we bring to those
Who can offend no more."—*Balder*.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

I.

CHINELYN MANOR HOUSE, where the Hawthornes lived, was a large, square built, steep-roofed edifice with a heavy cornice round it and uniformly placed windows, rather high than wide, which were furnished with seats throughout. The fire-places, by some architectural freak, peculiar either to the island or the date of the house, were placed each in a corner of the rooms, which were otherwise sufficiently lofty and well-proportioned. Their plenishing was neither new nor choice, and the whole—the kitchen excepted—looked bare and comfortless, probably from the fact that the best of them were rarely entered except for cleaning purposes.

But upstairs there was a little parlour looking eastward over the sea, with an old wooden balcony before its window, which the boys always called "Mother's Room." This balcony was almost falling with decay, but there grew up over it on one side a bush of sweet clematis, while a red cluster rose garlanded it on the other. Mary had trained them there from a girl, and if they had had the gift of speech they could have told us all the story of her life. Many a time had she stood out there watching towards Longridge white cliffs as a sail went and came into the bay—her lover's sail. Spies had seen the flutter of her dress in the early morning and late evening, which signalled that she was on the look out for him. Poor, simple, loving little heart! happy vigils were those, happy wakings in the gray dawn, happy dreams in the long night when he was just coming or but just gone! And spies had seen her, too, in her deep, deep sorrow, gazing wistfully—oh, so wistfully—over the sea where that fatal sail might, perhaps, come never again! They had seen her there with her children almost daily since, and a right pleasant place for them it was. What should they know of

eager hopes enjoyed, of dumb, dead agonies there suffered through? Mother's eyes were all sunshine looking into their baby eyes, mother's voice was all song and sweetness over their rest, mother's heart was warm to the core for love of them! They were God's gifts to her; if she had been childless as well as wronged, she would have gone to her grave uncalled.

The boys to their lives' end had a sacred remembrance of this room; such a remembrance as most of us retain of the church where we went as children—of the chamber where we have looked our last on a dear, dear friend—or of the grave where we have buried our best beloved. First prayers, first lessons, first stories belonged to its archives, and all Sunday teachings ever since. The big old family Bible with its quaint engravings, each one an indelible history, was kept there; and from the hour when they had stood on one footstool, or knelt on one chair, with brotherly arms round each other's neck, to look at them and listen to their mother's reading out the narrative, they had loved and revered that book; one of them never wavered in his love and

reverence for it. This room continued ever the brightest, distinctest spot in their early home. Under its window lay the garden, a place of delights; so old, green, and shady; on the outskirts so sunny, so flower-gaudy in front. The fold-yard was beyond, with its kine knee-deep in the golden straw, its rough, mettlesome colts, sleek black pigs, and strutting poultry; the rick-yard adjoined, and there were few gayer rural sights to be seen anywhere than that balconied window presented on a dewy sunshiny morning, when the waggon, high piled with sacks of grain, was rolling heavily through the great gates, its team of four black horses in fringed scarlet trappings, and with musical bells at their collars chiming as they went.

II.

Hitherto I have spoken of Mary Hawthorne in her past, and, so to say, *ideal*, relation, but now let me speak of the woman in her habit as she lived. She had an air of rusticity, though nature had gifted her with delicately refined features;

these features, pallid and worn, with deeply sunken eyes under a brow like marble, could not but look remarkable; her countenance, that once attracted by its rosy maiden beauty, now fascinated by an intensity of suffering expression; but it will easily be understood that its charm for a *lover's* gaze was gone. Her dress was simple and homely, but graceful in its simplicity, showing that, while she had put by youth and gaiety, she could not put by the subtle perfume and *attrait* they leave behind. Sorrow had done for her the work of time, for though not yet thirty years old, broad silver lines streaked her luxuriant hair where the cap did not cover it, and the delicate veins of her thin hands shone distinctly through the white skin, and yet with all this subdued, refined tone of feature and colour, her general air was still that of a woman of the class in which she had been born and bred. I would have this clearly felt and appreciated, because it goes to explain subsequent events.

She guided her father's household carefully and assiduously; she put her hand to many a task which is now servant's work without feeling

it irksome; to and fro in the kitchen, to and fro in the dairy, to and fro in the poultry-yard, she went all day and every day; serviceable, energetic, thrifty, methodical in all her labours. *Methodical*, I have said—*mechanical* would have expressed more correctly the manner of her activity. One saw that in this life, which, as true wife and mother, would have satisfied every desire of her nature, her heart was not and never could be. For enjoyment she had got hard routine, for happiness she had got necessity, for daily sustenance of soul she had got duty. Left innocent in her natural estate, she would have shared some plain honest man's homely joys and homely cares, would have brought up his children in the fear of God, and would have died blessed and blessing others by her fair example. Cast adrift as she had been from a woman's only safe anchor, all her prayers, all her patience, fortitude, resignation, had been unable to stay her craving heart; she found her feet set in a grove, and walked straight along it, looking upwards for guidance and support; but that did not prevent that in the dead time of the night, in the soft evening,

in the gleamy morning, old sights and sounds should carry her thoughts away from the tame & dull present to the bitter sweet of the past.

Mary Hawthorne's battle was to fight over again almost every day.

III.

The day to which Mary had looked forward with greatest dread came upon her unawares at last. That evening, when her boys returned home after their rencontre with Sir Philip Nugent, she was sitting alone in her room, the window being open to the balcony, and the sun shining over the garden. She saw them enter by the wicket gate from the meadow, and, after pacing about for some minutes, throw themselves down on the grass, under the great walnut-tree. She had her Bible open on her lap, but she regarded the children, who were holding what seemed a very vehement argument; she saw that Cyrus was much excited, and that he would have broken away from his brother more than once, if Robert had not held him fast by main force. She had never accus-

tomed herself to interfere in their trifling fraternal differences, being of opinion that such righted themselves the more easily for being let alone; so the present scene would have passed unnoticed, had not something further occurred. Mr. Ford came in leisurely from the Parsonage lane, and no sooner did he appear than Cyrus sprang towards him, and began to question him with fiery eagerness. Robert stood by silent, but endeavouring by sign and gesture to restrain his brother, while he looked from time to time up at the balconied window, where he discerned the listening outline of his mother's figure.

Even from that distance, Mary could perceive that Cyrus's easily roused indignation was burning on lip and cheek, and that Robert looked strangely downcast and uneasy. The minister laid his hand solemnly on Cyrus's shoulder, and answered him. When Mary saw his grave earnest manner, and the sudden effect it had upon the impetuous lad, she understood what it meant, and, dropping on her knees, she hid her face in her hands and tried to pray.

Half an hour after, when Mr. Ford came into

the room, she was still in the same attitude—she had never once stirred since she sank down upon the floor. His step disturbed her, and she rose to her feet nervously, passing her hand before her eyes, to gain a little time, and then stood holding by the table all white and dismayed. The good clergyman was touched by her look of plaintive distress.

“The time is come, Mary, for you and your children to understand each other fully,” said he.

“Oh! how shall I tell them, Mr. Ford? If they despise their mother, I cannot survive it! How shall I tell them of their cruel shame?” cried she, trembling and weeping. All her courage, all her often rehearsals of this trying time, vanished in view of the reality.

“You have lived through fiercer trials than this, Mary; but the boys know the truth now. It seems that something has occurred to excite their suspicion; they did not tell me what, neither did I ask; but Cyrus demanded an explanation of me, and I gave it to spare you.”

Mary looked as if she would have asked how they bore it, and he replied to her unspoken question,

"You must allow for Cyrus's proud spirit for a little while, but Robert is only anxious to show how much more he can love you. Oh! Mary, God has given you a treasure in that boy's heart."

"I know it, sir, I know it!" said she, sending a wild, mournful, pleading glance towards her other darling, who lay upon the grass alone, sullenly plucking the daisies and casting them away. With every idle fling of his hand he dealt a stab at his poor mother's swelling breast. She felt how anger, shame, and unutterable disappointment were dealing with him, and would have endured their pangs a thousand-fold to spare him one. Glancing upwards to the balcony, he saw her white face watching him thus; he sprang to his feet, and fled indoors. She ran out upon the stairs to meet him; he came and flung himself upon her bosom, crying between his passionate sobs, "Oh, mother, mother, I do love you, I do love you!" as if he had been thinking of her unjustly, until he met her sad eyes upon him, and read in them a humble plea against her children's reproach. It was several minutes before she be-

came conscious that Robert also was near her, with his arm twined round her waist. Mr. Ford had gone out and closed the door upon that pitiful scene; I think we will close the door upon it too.

IV.

Mary's children had told her how and where they had seen their father, and when the lads were gone to their early rest she stood out upon the balcony gazing through the clear spring twilight at the little yacht in the bay whose frail spars were designed in sharp lines against the blue sky. "Why was it there?" she asked herself; and one moment there came into her cheeks a wavering blush, the next, sick and trembling, she was fain to support herself against the crazy balustrade with its flowery wreath.

Old Simon was in the garden smoking his evening pipe, and paying visits of inspection and admiration to the well-tended plots of flowers upon the lawn. He knew Mary was up in her room, and presently he called out to her—

"Mary, these double-stocks of yours are doing

finely this year. Come and take a turn with me if you are not over-busy."

She was a good daughter, and always obeyed her father's behests; without considering her own trial of the day or suffering it to keep her in solitude, she immediately joined him, and they continued to walk to and fro, until the old man's pipe was out and himself tired; then he went indoors and left her out upon the lawn. She had not said a word to him about the arrival of Sir Philip Nugent at Chinelyn, or of the revelation that had just been made to her children. It was a subject on which she would ever, if it were possible, have avoided speaking to him; they could not agree upon it; time had not lessened the bitterness of his resentment in any measure against his daughter's destroyer, or made him regard the two boys as anything but visible signs of a dishonoured name. His pride was quite as sensitive, quite as tenacious, as that of any born noble or gentleman in the land; yet in his practical spirit he looked to the boys' future as, in the main, depending upon him, and did his plain duty by them without ever learning to love them really.

When he left her in the garden, Mary strayed out through the wicket into the sweet open meadows. There was a lovely lonely bank under the hedge of the wood, in whose moist hollows grew the treasures of yellow primroses, and lying along it was the decaying trunk of a gigantic elm which had recently been felled. She and the children were in the habit of visiting this spot on summer Sunday evenings, and the same intense longing for quiet and repose drew her steps towards it now. No one would seek her there; in that solitude she could take her life into her hands and examine it where it was weak, guard it where it was exposed, above all, arm it against the subtle foe that lurked within the citadel. What is most women's salvation—their faithful love—was Mary's danger; she knew it and prayed against it. It is hopeless to try to explain what it made her suffer. It is wisest, when we can do it, to put away the past altogether; we have done with it in the way of action, we cannot improve it by way of thought. We have a future, at least we have a present, where effort need not be spent in vain, but it is ~~sexton's~~ work to linger

moralizing perpetually amongst graves. If we have strength, close we that inevitable gate and go forth amongst the striving throng, to live and labour, to wait and pray. This was what Mary Hawthorne had endeavoured and was still endeavouring to do, but when her children told her what had happened to them upon the shore, when she learnt that their father was actually at Chinelyn, the sharpest thorn that had yet pierced her in mounting the hill Difficulty pricked her to the bone. What had brought him back if it were not the urging of that unsatisfied love that had been the bane of both—blinding him to honour, spotting her sweet innocence? How should she meet him—how repulse, when her own weak, passionate heart, even in his absence, pleaded for him so warmly? These were questions that she asked herself again and yet again as she rested on the fallen tree, and the evening grew dim and ever dimmer all around.

But help was preparing for her—such help and such safety as Heaven oftentimes gives to the weak in their own despite. Foresight is a melancholy gift; perhaps if Mary had foreseen the manner

of her deliverance, it might have appeared crueller than any pang she had yet endured ; in all sincerity she prayed, " Lead me not into temptation. Keep me from evil," and she was kept according to her desire—faithful if faint—and preserved against herself.

When she left the Manor gardens and strayed across the meadow, she did not perceive that she was watched, but Sir Philip Nugent had seen her while walking to and fro the lawn with her father, and he now followed her, carefully evading discovery by keeping under covert of the trees. He had come to Chinclyn with an object : his wretched wife was dead, and he proposed to redeem past wrong and gain present happiness by marrying Mary. He had pleased his imagination with visions of her joyous beauty as he remembered it, of her youthful grace and simplicity, then capable of being moulded into any form :—but what did he behold when he came stealthily under the Manor hedge and looked over at her in the garden. He beheld a woman separated from him in state and station by ten long years of almost menial work—a woman considerably older than her age,

thin to emaciation, sorrowful almost to apathy. He was touched, but he was repelled : this poor faded Mary, to whose lips he had pressed the cup of all bitterness, never could be wife of his.

He was a man of the world ; not altogether heartless, perhaps, but certainly selfish. He was not the Curtius to cast himself into that gulf which long separation had made between the habits of her life and his. To meet her again would be like making a new acquaintance, and might still further revolt his fastidious taste ; but for her two beautiful boys he would provide. How glad, how proud would he have been could he have called either of them his lawful heir and bearer of his name, for no child had been born to him of his marriage : he had no son to carry down to posterity the talents and honours of his race. In this his pride was very fitly scourged ; his early sin became his life-long, his irreparable mortification.

Mary sat upon the secluded bank until the moon rose and the heavy dews began to fall ; Sir Philip Nugent, concealed in the wood behind, could see the outline of her figure so expressive of

weariness and dejection, and when she moved to go home he followed her again. He saw her enter the garden and pass slowly round to the house door. Pausing upon the white moonlit steps, she lifted her pallid face towards heaven, and through the hushed stillness he heard a long-quivering sigh breathed from her lips; for a moment he was minded to present himself before her and to turn her sorrow into a very joy of surprise, but while he hesitated, Mary went in, and the door closed behind her. Five minutes later, he was thankful that he had escaped the soft temptation of pity; and he went back to the village, secretly congratulating himself upon having been preserved from an act of tender foolishness which might have resulted in a pestering train of troublesome consequences to his life's end.

And Mary went up to her quiet room to gaze at the yacht in the still, lake-like bay; it rested full in the track of the moonlight upon the water, and if it ever looked dim to her eyes that night it was that she beheld it through a mist of tears. When the morning came, she had not slept, and the traces of her vigil were seen in fevered cheek, slow, dull

glance, and livid, sunken circles round her eyes. Poor Mary—poor faded rose! nothing but the lingering perfume of thy love can make thee lovely now!

V.

That was a long, tedious day; she kept the boys at home, and expected from moment to moment that Sir Philip Nugent would appear at the Manor House as he told them he intended; but the hours wore on until evening, and he never came. At the turn of the tide she saw preparation astir on board of the yacht; its white sails were spread to the freshening breeze, its long scarlet pennon fluttered at the mast, and it glided out of the bay; slowly past Longridge white cliffs, slowly out of sight! Mary strained her gaze after it until she could see it no more; then she sank down upon the floor, her arm on the window ledge, and her throbbing head leant down upon it. It was surely too hard, too cruel to be true! Heaven could not mock her so cruelly!

The boys had also witnessed the departure of

the yacht, and presently they went up to their mother's room; at the sound of their approach, with her habitual and mechanical self-restraint in their presence, she had risen from her attitude of humiliation, and snatched her ordinary work with her needle. They seemed surprised to find her thus employed.

"The boat is gone, mother," said Cyrus, in a disappointed, half-reproachful tone. "Our father *might* have kept his word."

Robert only stood by her chair, with his arm affectionately round her shoulders. She made no answer to Cyrus's remark, but after a few minutes of intolerable silence, she just turned her face to Robert's breast and began to cry, not loudly, not passionately, but with a weary abandonment as if her heart must either overflow or burst. Cyrus impetuously flung himself upon his knees, and with his head in her lap cried too, but Robert kissed her soft quivering lips and reminded her—"Mother, you have Cyrus and me to love you," and with that she broke out into a repentant fit of passionate self-accusal, saying that she needed this further chastisement, for her heart had been

going astray from God. To her children she was almost a saint—they could not understand her; poor Mary knew, however, knew by the startling shock of her disappointment, how far her hopes and imagination had gone back towards the love which could never more be anything but deadly sin to her.

As Cyrus was the most violent in his sorrow, so it was the soonest exhausted, and by and by he was out in the balcony with a book, diverting his mind. It was from his position here that he presently saw Mr. Ford coming down the Parsonage lane towards the Manor House, and announced it to his mother.

“Go, Robin, and bring him up here; then leave us, my darlings, I must speak with him alone,” said Mary, drying her swollen eyes.

Robert obeyed, and when he had ushered the clergyman into the room, he signed to his brother, and they went downstairs together.

“You are in bitter trouble, Mary; you have heard who was at Chinelyn last night?” said Mr. Ford, interrogatively.

“Yes, sir.”

"I come to you as an ambassador from him now; we had a long interview this morning, and much talk on a very serious subject. He wishes to educate and provide for the boys; he saw them, as they have probably told you?"

"Yes." Mary looked vaguely at her clasped hands for several moments; she was scarcely equal to any effort of reflection then, but she asked at length, "Does he intend to take my children away from me?"

"He has not the power to do that; he has no authority whatever over them, Mary; so do not terrify yourself with imaginary dangers. He saw that the boys were fine intelligent fellows, and thinks—as you have often told me you thought yourself—that they are capable of higher things than Simon Hawthorne destines them to. But you know what my advice has always been?"

"That they should be kept in their present station, where mortification is less likely to assail them than in a higher position."

"Yes. I expressed my opinion freely to Sir Philip Nugent, but he quite set it at nought.

He has no other children, and would gladly bring up one or both of the boys to any profession they might select. He demanded that they should be taken into our counsels, and permitted to decide for themselves. I should be inclined to spare them that responsibility, were I in your place."

Mary roused herself and asked why? her own sentiments, the maternal love, pride, ambition, leant towards giving the boys their own will in what must affect the whole course of their future lives. Mr. Ford perceived her bias, and reasoned against it as a man of his profession and mild, unambitious, conscientious, steadfast character, might be expected to do. He told her that Sir Philip Nugent was entirely a man of the world; that he had no religious principles, and consequently no real reliability of conduct, as his acts but too well proved; he told her that her children, in being trained under his auspices, would imbibe his dangerous views, and be ultimately separated from her by the broadest barrier which can divide parents from their children—inequality and diversity of mind and manners. Mary knew

not how wide this barrier is, knew not how effectually it had but just operated against herself.

"I do not think my boys would ever cease to love me," said she, with touching humility; "I dare not deal untruly with them, Mr. Ford, let the consequences be what they may. We must tell them what their father has offered them."

"It is not dealing untruly, Mary, to keep poison from those who cannot discriminate between it and wholesome food," replied Mr. Ford, with sermonic air and illustration. "You are justified, certainly, in hiding poison out of the way of a child."

Mary had great respect for her pastor, but she had still greater respect for the free-will of her boys; she was not convinced by the force of his reasoning in the smallest measure. She would have been pleased to see her children educated, and taking their places in the world like gentlemen. She felt in her fine woman's nature, that their strain of mind and temper was of their father's class rather than of hers; and that for Cyrus, at least, there would never be happiness, never be contentment, in a lowly station.

"I pledged my word to Sir Philip Nugent that I would faithfully lay his offer before you, Mary, and I have done so," said Mr. Ford. "I am sorry to see the favour with which you are disposed to receive it, and I hope you will consult your father before accepting it."

"I will. But oh, sir! you do not know Cyrus, you do not understand what a beautiful mind he has," pleaded Mary. "If he were taught in the schools, he might be made a true poet. I could show you some of his pieces now——"

"*Poeta nascitur non fit*," replied the parson, and then translated the phrase for Mary's unlearned comprehension.

"But he has *genius*, sir. Master Scrope, who has seen great varieties of life in many parts of the world, says that Cyrus has *true genius*."

"That the lad has a fine and fluent fancy, Mary, I cannot deny."

Mary interrupted the minister with jealous, motherly haste.

"Well, then, Mr. Ford, if he gets a learned education, will not that bring his talent, which God has given him, to a more profitable use?"

Genius is not needed to sow corn, shear sheep, or plough in the furrow. Its work is other than that—altogether nobler and higher.”

“A young man makes none the worse farmer for having a good head-piece,” replied the parson, laconically.

“That is all very true, sir; but you do not take a finely tempered razor to mow the grass; a strong scythe mows it better, and the razor would be spoilt over the coarse work.”

The learned gentleman thought that Mary did not reason amiss, considering her opportunities, and he paid her an old-fashioned compliment to that effect, adding that Cyrus had his best wit from her.

“No, Mr. Ford, no!” cried she, eagerly; “Cyrus has nothing of the Hawthornes about him; he might not belong to us, and that is why I think more of having a higher way in the world opened for him than I do for Robert. Robert is patient; he takes things more easily than his brother; he is happier in his temper and more contented. Now, Cyrus chafes already against his grandfather’s restraint.”

"Robert is a good boy, and he will grow up into a good man. If either of the lads must go to Sir Philip Nugent, I should send him, as the one least likely to suffer from the transplantation."

"I am not anxious for Robert, he has never given me an uneasy hour since he was born; but I am anxious for Cyrus."

"The more need, then, to keep him under your own watchful guardianship."

"I could not keep him long, sir; it is but a few days ago that he said to me, in his thoughtless way, 'Mother, I would rather cast myself on the world with a staff and a tramp's wallet, than stagnate all the days of my life at Chinylyn.'"

"I am afraid the lad is very far gone in romance, indeed," replied the parson, with a shake of his reverend head. "A staff and a tramp's wallet indeed! Master Scrope is not the most judicious friend in the world for a boy of his temper."

"And Cyrus thinks he is the best friend he has."

“The most entertaining perhaps, with his stories of plays and play-actors, but far from the *best*. An unsettled character like Master Scrope is never a safe companion for youth, but youth, being amused, is not likely to regard that. It would not astonish or trouble me to hear any day that Master Scrope had betaken himself to the staff and the tramp’s wallet, but I should be grieved indeed to find that Cyrus had followed his example.”

“We must not let him feel himself a prisoner then, sir. He will never thrive in bonds.”

“Mary, let the matter lie dormant for a single week. Watch the lad for symptoms of revolt; let him quietly develope any new ideas the event of yesterday may have put into his mind, and be guided accordingly.”

Mary promised that she would.

“It will be at once the wisest and the safest plan. I will converse with the boy myself, and make a point of sounding his capabilities and inclinations. You know, Mary, that young people are apt to mistake a fancy for a vocation, and only to dis-

cover their blunder when it is too late. If Cyrus really loathe the idea of being a farmer, it would be wrong to condemn him to a life where he could only find his consolation in low and degrading pleasures ; but if he do not, then it seems to me more free and independent than any other—plenty of leisure to read, plenty of pastoral themes to sonnetize about.”

“ Ah ! sir, you do not understand Cyrus. There are thoughts in his mind we none of us can sound.”

Perhaps the good clergyman was slightly piqued, or perhaps he considered it useless to discuss the theme with the partial mother of the young genius any longer ; for after a few feeling words of advice and comfort, he took his departure, desiring that Cyrus and Robert both should come up to the Parsonage after morning school on the morrow.

The two boys watched Mr. Ford away, and then they returned to their mother’s room. Cyrus was evidently wishful to know what the lengthy discussion in their absence had been about, but, agreeably to her promise, Mary

avoided the subject, and when he came caressing round her, as his custom was when he wanted to gain any favour or intelligence, she asked him to give her the little red pocket-book that she might see what he had been writing lately. He complied, and Mary was reading his composition of the day before for only the third time, when old Simon Hawthorne's voice was heard calling from below—

“Cyrus, are you in your mother's room? If you are, come away with me to the Manor Butts to see after the sheep.”

“I hate this farming worse than ever, mother!” cried the lad, angrily, but at a few quiet words from her he went downstairs and joined his grandfather.

She had not been able to deny herself the indulgence of telling him that perhaps he might ere long be delivered from his ignoble destiny, and that was a pleasant new cud of reflection for him to chew.

VI.

Mr. Ford was an admirable parish priest, mild in manner, but in principle unflinching; not acute in discerning the minute traits of character, and not deeply versed in the wisdom of this world, but eager, untiring, enthusiastic in his holy calling; a man whom everybody loved and most people respected—not *all*. There were a crafty few at Chinelyn, as elsewhere, who, having imposed on his simplicity, despised him for his very virtue of unsuspiciousness. He was a Nathanael in whom was no guile. His countenance was good; when he warmed up in the pulpit, it became noble. His wife, herself a most gentle, kindly woman, said he was a saint upon earth. Nobody could know the parson and his delicate helpmate without being the better for it. Even Mark Brett, one of the wildest and most incorrigible characters in the village, was once heard to say that it was rank blasphemy to utter a word that could hurt the feelings of Parson Ford and his wife.

It was always a pleasure to the Hawthorne boys to go up to the Parsonage, buried alive in trees and shrubs; for Mrs. Ford, who had no children of her own, liked them and treated them without formality; claiming little services at their hands such as most boys like to render to a pretty, gentle-voiced lady. She was busy amongst her flowers when they went into the grounds, attired in homely gown and still more homely headgear, but it was out of the power of unfashionable attire to eclipse the sunshine of her looks and ways. As soon as she saw the boys she dropped her garden-rake and met them with a hand for each, and a smile behind which you scarcely discerned the lines physical suffering had drawn upon her face or the thickly sown, white hairs in her dark braids; she had a good and happy countenance, to which all good hearts warmed naturally.

"Let me rake that plot for you, Mrs. Ford, will you?" said Robert, picking up the garden tool.

The boys were not aware of any special object in their present visit: their mother had told them to go up to the Parsonage as they returned from school—that was all.

“Yes, Robert, I shall be glad of your help, and Cyrus, I must show you how beautifully that red rose is growing that you nailed up for me over the study window;” and having led him in that direction the parson’s wife rapped on the glass asking, “Henry, are you there? Cyrus and Robert Hawthorne are with me; can you come out?” and forth Mr. Ford issued with a straw hat on his head, and a lean stiff-haired terrier, famous against rats, at his heels—the parson’s barns were infested with rats, otherwise, I think his natural taste in pets would have inclined him to a stately paced black cat rather than to this ugly mongrel cur, which, however, had honest points of its own not altogether unworthy of study.

By degrees the conversation, desultory at first, became more serious, and edged away from garden flowers to field grasses, to the springing crops and the young stock. The parson had a gentle way of leading imperceptibly up to any subject which he wished to bring under the consideration of persons whose views were unknown to him—a way which in some men might have seemed jesuitical, but which in him arose out of a simple kindness

of heart ever desirous to avoid offence ; and thus the boys were drawn unconsciously into expressing many feelings and sentiments which they had hitherto only avowed to each other.

"You ought to begin to look on agriculture with great interest now since you are destined to be a farmer, Cyrus," said Mr. Ford.

Cyrus coloured and replied emphatically, "But I never shall be a farmer, sir."

"Then we must keep Robert at the Manor House," said Mrs. Ford. "Chinelyn cannot afford to lose both you young Hawthornes."

"Why do you dislike the idea of being a farmer, Cyrus? I should have thought it was a quiet, independent sort of existence such as would suit your fancy ; all poets and romancers extol the pastoral life," observed the parson.

"How many of them *lived* it, sir?" retorted Cyrus. "I think it was often distance that lent enchantment to their view."

"That is the glamour which is deceiving yourself with regard to the world, Cyrus. You will be glad to return to us some day."

"Perhaps so, sir. Master Scrope likes country

quiet now that he is old, but when he was young he wandered about and saw many manners and many men. He is very pleasant to listen to, and I think he is happier within himself than he would have been if he had stayed in a rural solitude where the human mind rusts for want of use."

"You are quoting Master Scrope's own words. I think, however, Cyrus, that if he had stayed in that rural seclusion he would have escaped many a sin, and would have had a clearer conscience to repose on in his latter days."

"He is a good old man, Mr. Ford."

"How do you know *that*, Cyrus? From what premises do you argue that Master Scrope is a good man?"

"He goes to church—he reads his Bible."

"He goes to church for decency's sake—he reads his Bible, but he does not believe it to be the inspired word of God. At best he is but a respectable heathen—neither guide nor model for you, Cyrus, let him be amusing as he may."

"How is it, sir, that the people send their children to him to be taught, he being what you say?" asked Robert, suddenly.

"He has kept his opinions to himself; until very recently I did not suspect them myself; ever since I have urged him to resign his office, and follow any other employment rather than that of an instructor of youth."

"I am very sorry for poor Master Scrope, Henry, and I do hope he will not leave Chinelyn," said Mrs. Ford, gently; "if we are patient and pray for him we may be permitted to do him good. He was much knocked about when he was young, and misfortunes brought him into bad company; but there is something very kind and genuine about him. He said once, you know, that he would be a Christian if he could."

"Master Scrope is not our question now: let us go back to Cyrus," replied Mr. Ford. "What do you propose to do if you leave us?"

"I should like my grandfather to send me to school somewhere; if he will not do that, I mean to go to sea."

"Very explicit! And have you any independent views for yourself, Robert?"

"No, I am content to stay at Chinelyn until the time comes for me to go to Uncle Joshua at

Walton Minster. I have never thought of anything else as possible. Perhaps if it had been settled at first for me to stay on at the farm I might have preferred that to varnish-making, but I know grandfather would never hear of any change now—besides, Uncle Joshua would be offended.”

“And he is a rich man,” added Cyrus, complacently. “As Robin has no objection, it will be a grand provision for him.”

“We shall see you Mayor of Walton some day, Robert,” said Mrs. Ford, with her pleasant smile; “but what will become of *you*, discontented boy?” she asked, turning to Cyrus, who was looking remarkably bright and audacious.

“Send me out into the world to seek my fortune!” replied he, laughing.

“First let us get you armed for the fight; it will not do to plunge empty-handed and bare-headed into that contest,” said the parson’s wife. “Let us see you put on discretion as well as valour, and faith in God as well as trust in yourself. How happy he looks, Henry!” She had approached the

boy, and laid her fair frail hand on his shoulder, gazing earnestly into his beautiful face.

"I think my mother has some idea in her head for me, for she whispered last night that ere long perhaps I might be set free from what she knows I dislike," replied the boy, blushing confusedly when he remembered what the way of that deliverance would probably be.

Mr. Ford made a private mental comment on the reticence of women in general and of Mary Hawthorne in particular, and then with a leisurely step returned to his study. He had accomplished his self-imposed task of sounding Cyrus, and had come to the conclusion, that whatever might befall him away from Chinelyn, nothing but mischief and distress were likely to result from keeping him there.

"We can but hope and pray that whatever is, may be for the best," he soliloquized with pious philosophy; "the matter seems to be ruled and directed by a stronger hand than ours."

VII.

When Simon Hawthorne was first made acquainted with Sir Philip Nugent's proposal about the boys, he was extremely angry, and would not listen to it; he said he was well able to provide for them himself, that their unnatural and wicked father had no right over them, and should not interfere. Mary thought she would have been obliged to give the matter up; but there was Cyrus urging her on the other hand; perhaps he urged her sometimes a little too vehemently, a little too selfishly—it was his character. At length Mr. Ford, rather against his inclination, was persuaded to act as mediator, and the old man was then induced to listen to reason. But he, like the parson, and for the same reasons, was more inclined to part with Robert than with Cyrus; besides his preference, if preference he had, inclined towards Cyrus rather than his brother; and yet another thing—Sir Philip Nugent had said that, if any difficulty were raised about giving up both the boys to his care, he would choose Robert

of the two. Poor Mary saw that this conclusion left the real difficulty untouched, and told her children that the straightest means of solving it was for each to proclaim his own wishes.

"Very well," replied Cyrus, readily enough; "I say, once for all, that I will never be a farmer, and that I will not stay in Chinelyn to stagnate a single day longer than I can help."

"And I say," subjoined Robert, "that I will remain a Hawthorne as long as I live, and follow Uncle Joshua's business as grandfather decided long since."

They were a perverse pair, the old man said, and perhaps he might have persisted in bending the twigs the way they would *not* grow, had not Mary shown him some of Cyrus's poetical effusions, and given up a whole evening to the hard task of convincing him that the boy's genius was a great gift which ought not to be wilfully choked by ignorance, or hidden in obscurity. The old man had the profoundest contempt for geniuses; there had been one in the family before, and he was its greatest disgrace—a licentious, wasteful, irreligious profligate—he told his daughter; if

Cyrus were going to turn out like *him*, it was little matter when or where he went.

Of course, Mary argued that Cyrus would be an honour to them, and never anything else; he had a good heart and good principles, therefore he was safe from low temptations, and loving her he would never break her heart by forgetting the right, and yielding to the wrong. Surely there is no love so confident in the fidelity and strength of its idol as maternal love! The difficulty was at last arranged. Sir Philip Nugent and Mr. Ford had exchanged several letters, and had come to an arrangement; nothing remained to be settled but the time and manner of Cyrus's departure. That also was decided upon; Sir Philip was with his yacht at Cowes; he would come round to Chinelyn about the middle of June, three weeks hence, and take him away. Mary received this announcement with a wonderful degree of self-command; but there was infinitely more pathos in her silence than there could have been in the most obtrusive sorrow: she firmly believed that she was acting for her darling's good, and in such a view personal sacrifice is met with alacrity by a mother.

The interval was one long preparation for the parting that was to come, and Cyrus made it all the harder by the way in which he followed his mother about, and clung to her at every instant. Even old Simon, who had never feigned any great affection for him, was touched, and said, "Better change thy mind, Cyr, and stay at home," but mother and son both negatived this proposition. "Well," added the old man, "if thee and thy father fall out, which with thy temper is not unlikely, then thee can come back to us."

"Cyr will learn to control his temper for his mother's sake, and for his own too," replied Mary, fondly kissing her darling, and Cyr, full of a boy's good resolutions, promised that he would.

Of course, the lad was dispensed from attendance at school, and Master Scrope saw little of him. The old man evidently missed his favourite; he became restless and absent at lessons, and when the short holiday for the hay harvest began, his cottage was one morning observed to be shut up. The key was in the door, the plain old furniture

was in its place, the clock in the corner was ticking still, but the cupboard and the bookshelves were bare, and the schoolmaster was absent without leave.

"I should have been very sorry if I had not been going away myself," said Cyrus; "I hope the poor old fellow will come to no harm."

Robert regretted the master much more deeply than his brother did, and for some days he hoped to see him return; but, the holiday terminated, he did not reappear, and Mr. Ford appointed his successor; a decently educated, orthodox-principled young man, who would never foster any rustic genius, or shock any prejudice whatever.

On the Sunday evening before Cyrus was to leave her, Mary said to Robert as they came out of the church, "Robin, go home with your grandfather to-night, and leave me and your brother to take our walk alone;" and they turned together through a little wood that skirted the churchyard, and so up through the fields and over the down.

Cyrus always remembered how, during that last walk with his mother, in the still Sabbath

twilight, they came to a gate overlooking the broken ground that goes down to Winchcombe Chine. Before them was the sea, in summer calm, the moon rising faintly over it, the foreground cast into masses of shadow by clumps of trees and furze; a few white sheep and some cattle feeding amongst them on the short tender grass, an old shepherd, with his watch-dog, passing down to the farm in the hollow. He had seen the same picture in all its details over and over again, but it was with the faint pure haze in the sky, and the Sabbath silence around, and the tender melancholy of farewell pervading it all, that he bore it in his memory from that hour. Perhaps, too, there were his mother's gentle counsels and gentler pleadings that he would love her always; that he would not let time or luxury lessen his tenderness for her or for his brother; and, above all, that in days of trial, temptation, and sorrow, he would not forget God whom she had taught him to love and honour in his childhood. When they had talked of all these things, they returned home along the top of the cliffs; Mary rather faint and weary, glad even of the support of

the boy's arm; Cyrus exalted with the sense of coming freedom, and, as he interpreted the change, of coming happiness.

VIII.

A pelting thunder rain dimpled the dark breast of the sea, as Mary Hawthorne and her two boys made their way through the Chine to the shore. Old Simon and Mr. Ford were following silently behind—all hearts were very full over this parting. Cyrus held his mother's hand with a convulsive pressure—had he a presentiment that he held it for the last time? that this hurried walk under the trees, that shed upon them tear-like showers, was the very last in which their footsteps would chime so lovingly together?

Mary did not try to veil her grief under a mask of smiles or composure. Ever as they went the tears rolled down her cheeks, and Cyrus kept saying, in his fresh young voice, half tremulous too,

“Don't cry, mother; oh, mother, don't cry so sadly!”

Mark Brett and his father, who saw them pass, came down after them upon the shore. The tide was low, but the boat from the yacht had got near in, and two sailors were there waiting. About a quarter of a mile out lay the yacht itself, with a solitary figure pacing to and fro upon the deck. Nobody, not even Mary, took any heed to him. The appearance of the sorrowful little group arrested his march, and he stood to watch it. It was no mere fancy of his that he heard a woman's wailing voice, loud and uncontrollable; it was Mary's voice, and its echo awoke in his mind a spasm of remorse. When Cyrus was in the boat and it was being pushed off into deep water by the fisherman, he saw her stretching out her hands after it, as if to call him back; but when the rowers bent to their oars and it shot swiftly towards the yacht, then her arms dropped. The severance was accomplished, and her darling gone from her for ever.

Those on the shore saw Cyrus wave his cap as he stepped upon the deck of the yacht; there was something gay and triumphant in the action, and Robert took off his, and waved it in

return: then old Simon, then Mr. Ford, did the same.

“Mother, darling, wave your handkerchief that Cyr may see you,” cried Robert, eagerly; and with an effort she obeyed.

As the elder Brett passed them in going up to his home he stopped to speak to Mary, and to wish her boy good luck, but Mark went by sullenly and without a word. Meanwhile the rain rained on, and the sea-mist rolling in gradually wrapped the yacht from their view. Mr. Ford and Simon then returned to the village, but Mary and Robert still lingered on the beach.

“If the fog would only lift for a moment that I might see him *once* more!” sobbed Mary.

Robert said perhaps it would, and they would wait. So they waited, sheltering under the edge of a fishing-boat that was drawn up upon the sands, until the returning tide flowed nearly to their feet; being obliged to move, they then turned their slow steps towards the Chine. When they had mounted a little way, they paused to look back; the rain had not ceased, but the atmosphere

was clearer. Over the white cliffs there was no storm at all.

"Mother, look ! there she goes," exclaimed Robert, suddenly, pointing to the yacht, which was coming out of the mist with her sails set.

"And the sunlight just touches her pennon ! Oh, Robin, I will have a good hope for your brother !" replied Mary, more cheerfully than she had spoken for days.

The curtain of mist held off until the yacht, rounding the point, disappeared from their view ; then they went wearily home, talking of him that was gone with that partial tenderness which in absence magnifies every virtue and ignores every fault. You would have thought, to hear the loving pair, that Cyrus was an angel lent to earth for a brief space to accomplish some high and holy mission, and then be seen no more.

"If he should ever become a great poet like Milton, or a writer of plays like Shakspeare, shouldn't we be proud of him then, mother ?" says Robert, who has a most enthusiastic and exalted faith in his brother's capabilities.

"I hope he will use the talents God has given

him for God's service," replies Mary, unconsciously quoting Parson Ford.

"Of course he would," Robert answered, and when the two reached home they were both a little comforted.

IX.

A great event at the Manor Farm was this departure of Cyrus, yet, great as it was, it made no cessation in the quiet daily routine of the life there lived. Mary wondered sometimes, and paused in the midst of some household task to inquire of herself, if it were really true that he was gone away from her, and that she had given him up out of her own hands into his father's for ever?

It *was* true. For the first week or fortnight she supported his absence with what might have seemed to some an apathetic indifference, though there was in her countenance that painful raising of the brow, that lustreless languor about the eyes, that grave depression of the lips, which

betrayed the constant presence of a repining thought. Still she went about her duties with a steady precision; still she interested herself in how many pounds of butter weekly the dairy yielded, and what was the daily contribution to the milk-pail of Dimple, Dapple, and Soft-eyes, her favourite Alderney cows. The motherly hens ran at her call just as cheerfully as they used to run when she was a merry little maiden; old Woodman, her father's white pony, followed her in the field; and Watch, the faithful sheep-dog, came fawning to her feet as affectionately as ever. Nothing of all these things was changed, but only Mary herself.

"The sun shines just as brightly and the air is as balmy as it used to be," she thought, "but they do not seem the same to me. The sun does not warm me, and the breeze does not strengthen, as they did once. I think it is that I have no more hope."

There was the proud feminine instinct in Mary which always tells a woman when her power is utterly at an end. There had been, unacknowledged even to herself, some vague looking

towards a future which might restore to her her early love—a reunion however distant—forgiveness and peace. But now she knew that the gulf between the past and the present would never more be closed or bridged over; perhaps, also, she had divined why. But the disappointment brought with it no bitterness—she was above that now. She accepted her fate patiently; plodded through the tame routine of her daily life, and was more than ever thoughtful for Robert and her father; but, even while wishing for their sakes to live, the springs of life dried slowly within her, under the fever heat of an incurable wound. She was assailed by frequent faintings, by a deplorable weakness, and they increased upon her fast.

“A creaking gate hangs long, Mary,” Mrs. Ford one day remarked to her, in proverbial reference to her own ill-health. “I am better one day and worse another, but how are you? It appears to me that you are not taking care of yourself.”

“Mrs. Ford, I believe I am dying; I have thought so a long time, and now I am sure of it,” was Mary’s quiet reply.

"Mary, you shock me! What has put such an idea into your head? I see no reason for such a painful fear."

"It is not so very painful to me; except for my father and the boys, it is not painful at all, for I am weary of my life!"

"Mary, it makes me very sad to hear you speak thus;" and the good woman clasped Mary's poor thin hand in both hers and gazed affectionately into her face. "Talk to me as if I were your sister; tell me what you feel; perhaps I can do you good."

"I do not suffer pain, but I have a deadly weakness; sometimes it seems as, if I did not make an effort and will to live a little longer, my eyes would close and my breath go from me without a pang."

"Mary, are you grieving after Cyrus?"

"No, it is not that. I think I am more and more content every day that he is gone. He is happier with his father than here. He says so in his letters."

"But I cannot bear to see you give yourself up in this way. Dr. Willis must come and talk you

out of your fancy. Henry shall send you some of his good port-wine, and you must promise me to drink it every day, will you ? ”

Mary promised, but the parson's good port-wine put no strength into her frame, and though Dr. Willis came and talked to her, he, and not she, was the convert. The experienced physician acknowledged that she was past his skill—he could not—no earthly medicament could—heal a broken heart.

It was of that old disease that Mary Hawthorne died.

X.

The wind comes sobbing at the lattice of Mary Hawthorne's room as the autumn reddens over the woods ; she is not in the balcony any more where the crimson rose opens its heart to the morning sun ; she is not in the old nursing chair plying her swift needle or reading her Bible ; she is not to and fro in the house with careful hand and thoughtful eye, or in the shady garden tending

her flowers. She is not on the steps watching to welcome her boys home from school—alas, there are no boys there to welcome any more! Mary has departed to the house appointed for all living. Her day—its work, pain, and patience—are ended, and she is taking her rest in the green graveyard that slopes seaward on Arbon Cliffs.

Upon the headstone is this simple inscription:—

“MARY HAWTHORNE,
Died August the Fifth, 1809,
Aged Thirty Years.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’”

Occasionally there comes a rough down-looking man along the steep lane that skirts the churchyard where she lies, who whispers softly to himself as he stops to look over the fence, “There is poor Mary’s grave.”

Mark Brett remembers her when they were an innocent pair and sat side by side on the same bench like little lovers at the dame-school. Perhaps her most enduring memorial is in that man’s heart.

The Manor House is very strange without her, though the same regular course as went on under her, goes on still under a comely presiding house-keeper, who is already in imagination house-mistress. Cyrus, who was summoned to receive his mother's blessing, and arrived only in time to see her buried, has gone back to his father, and even Robert is away to Walton Minster. 'Tis easy to perceive that a new regime has been initiated at the Farm, and that the former one is past away for ever. Mary's room is shut up, and the sunshine hardly enters at the sullied glass, but what matter? None who loved it are there now to be hurt by the neglect. Old Simon Hawthorne comes of a race of philosophers whom the course of time and nature easily consoled.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

AT MESSRS. HAWTHORNE AND CO'S.

"WITH devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself."

SHAKESPEARE.

I.

FIFTY years ago Walton Minster was, to all outward appearance, exactly the same as it is to-day, namely, a drowsy little city with a well-preserved cathedral church, a large market-place having an ancient stone cross in the midst, and a network of confused, narrow streets and lanes radiating from it. The aristocracy of the town rallied round about the Minster, where steep gardens clustered green and shady under its walls, hiding from profane view the ecclesiastical retirement of Dean and Canons and the statelier

abodes of a few remnants of old families, who still clung to the dim city houses with which their names were inseparably blent. It was edifying to behold these blue-blooded patricians erecting their heads above the common herd, and, if their monuments spake true, succumbing haughtily to the common lot. That the Leighs, Nugents, Mauleverers, Langdales, Howards, Percys, Fairfaxes could die—die, and go to dust like the plebeians who ministered to their base physical needs—was a humiliating proof that the great scheme of humanity had been formed on democratic principles without any special view to them. There are more epitaphs than one left yet upon the hoary Minster walls, that seem to protest against this levelling conclusion to mortal grandeur at which modern sanctity glances aside with pharisaical reprehension: these dead men thank God from their tombstones that they lived virtuous lives, were kept in great honour and prosperity, and never evened with other sinners until Death deplored them of their distinctions and laid them in the dust; and we thank God with our lips that we live in such pious times when the dark

ages of our ancestors are past, and an illumination of private lights is blinking insolently in the eyes of the sun. Which is the better?—this or that. The darkness, or the Will-o'-the-wisps abroad in the daytime?

Close beside the market-cross, and giving that gray relic a picturesque beauty of light and shadow through their bowery branches, were three glorious oaks which tradition said were older than the town itself—sons indeed of the primeval forest that once clothed all the romantic valley of the Gled. The country-folks grouped round their enormous boles with their baskets of butter and eggs, fruit and vegetables, the old women wearing red-hooded cloaks and the young ones broad straw hats, made a lively scene under their grateful shelter on fine summer Saturdays; these holdings were the high places of the market, and thither wended all prudent housewives, secure of finding there the best rural produce for their money. There was one ancient dame, Nanny Brigget, as well known as the Cross itself, who never failed to inform new customers—such, for instance, as a young matron fresh to the town,

or a gentleman's recently engaged housekeeper—that first and last she had sat under the same branch of the same tree every Saturday from ten till two for “better than fifty year,” without missing once in all that time to anybody's knowledge.

At one side of the square was the Town Hall, and ranging from it all round the place were the dwellings of the more substantial shop-keepers. The professional men hung about the purlieus of the Minster, neither quite accepted nor quite rejected of its hereditary denizens, and a few old-fashioned respectables still stayed faithfully by the obscure and narrow streets where their progenitors had lived and laboured.

Of this latter class were Messrs. Hawthorne and Co., the Co. being embodied in the sole person of Mr. Reuben Otley, whose manufacturing premises were in the rear of their houses, which adjoined each other, and looked out upon one of the narrowest, ugliest, dreariest streets in all Walton Minster.

The partners were both bachelors, and both elderly men, with each a housekeeper of grave

repute; and it was to the home of one, and the careful supervision of both, that Robert Hawthorne found himself transferred in something less than a month after his mother's death. The change to him from the sweet flowery island to the dull sordid streets of a northern provincial town, was great indeed, and it is no exaggeration to say that, for a time, he loathed the place and all in it. The grandeur of the old Minster church scarcely impressed him; he had neither antiquarian nor historical lore to embellish it with poetical associations, nor an imagination vivid enough to realize its past. The bit of the town that pleased him most was the market-day bustle round the Cross, though, to his unaccustomed ears, the harsh voices of the chaffering women were a drawback even there. Those who in a foreign land have experienced that sad heart-craving which we call home-sickness, may imagine what Robert Hawthorne felt when he was thus cast adrift from all beloved and familiar things, and exiled amidst the strange faces and strange ways of Walton Minster. He might look forward to no return—no pleasant periodical holiday-time;

he had changed his country for good and all, and belonged henceforward through life till death to the firm of Hawthorne and Co.

II.

Finding that his young relative was already a fair reader, writer, and accountant, Mr. Joshua Hawthorne thought it fit to dispense with any further schooling, and exalted him at once to a stool in the clerk's office, where Robert was the youngest amongst six apprentices. A dingy place this office was, dark by nature, but darker still by art; a thick green curtain being stretched across the lower panes of the smoky windows, to exclude all view of the street; a precaution against youthful idling which might have been safely laid aside, for there was literally nothing to be seen, except relays of children making dust-heaps or mud-pies, according as the weather permitted. Upon the walls were stretched two or three discoloured maps, and in conspicuous places, over the chimney-piece, on the panels of the door,

and elsewhere, were wafered up little dark blue papers, with moral maxims printed on them in letters of gold—maxims exaltative of honesty, diligence, sobriety, discretion, punctuality, and other minor virtues, essential to the success of men in trade. To Robert's ingenuous mind these maxims sounded beautiful, and he experienced a grave shock when he heard how wittily the apprentice vivacity could parody them; he was a modest lad, fresh from the pure atmosphere of home, and blushed at a coarse or irreverent saying like any girl.

Mr. Reuben Otley, as might be expected from a man who ornamented his apprentices' room with trite moral sentences, was a person harsh and stern in aspect and in practice a rigid disciplinarian. He was not so much disliked as he was feared; a glance from his eye was warning enough to any dilatory youngster; he was obeyed at a word, and he made it to be understood that his rules were as the laws of the Medes and Persians which altered not. He was well served, as a matter of course, and though the lads in his absence dared to laugh at and travesty his wise saws, yet in his presence

it was who could be most emulous to put them in action. It was his boast that never since he entered the firm of Hawthorne and Co. had clerk or workman been discharged for dishonesty, idleness, or insubordination, and that his apprentices had all turned out diligent and successful men of business. There was some truth in this. Mr. Reuben Otley understood well the science of government, and impressed those under him with an assurance that the slightest breach of discipline, truth, or honesty, would draw down upon the delinquent the fullest weight of his vengeance. One favourite saying of his was this: "It is a capital crime against social order to pardon the smallest error;" and from time to time he would take occasion to deliver a sort of warning of judgment to the people in his employ, when some event had happened in the town sufficiently flagrant to point the moral.

Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, though nominally the head of the firm, took a less active part in the conduct of its business than Mr. Reuben Otley. He was a fine portly old gentleman, with enough resemblance to his elder brother Simon to mark their close family relationship; but commerce with

the world had given him a more enlarged mind, and a natural benignity of temper made his manners suave and gracious. Perhaps his watchful mildness, consideration and help, did quite as much towards preserving the balance of duty amongst their servants as the stricter rule of his co-partner ; at all events they liked him better.

The confidential clerk and overseer of the works, Mr. Constant, familiarly styled "Conny," was a smart dapper little personage, soft and slow in manner and gently complimentary towards the weaker sex, though he had never paid it the highest compliment of selecting from its fair files a helpmate for life. He was suspected of employing his bachelor leisure in the composition of the sentimental verses which embellished the poet's corner of the *Walton Courant* ; and in consequence, some of the apprentices, who were of a romantic turn, greatly admired and tried to imitate him in his dress and graceful airs. Robert Hawthorne once showed some of his brother's rhymes to the poetical clerk, and had the prime satisfaction of learning that he, Conny, thought they would be very pretty, if they were only a little more

polished, and Robert, much pleased with approbation from such a high quarter, wrote off his opinion to Cyrus that very day. I know not whether Cyrus appreciated it at its true value; he had not the personal acquaintance of Conny, and perhaps failed in discerning what an important personage he was in his own community, for Conny was one of those eminently successful men who succeed in imposing their own self-estimate on all with whom they come in contact. Except amongst adepts, a shining lacquer has a tolerable chance of passing for fine gold.

Amongst Robert's companions of the desk there was a diversity of manners as well as of gifts. The three eldest—Rees, Lovat, and Brewster—were nearly out of their time; John Otley had still three years to serve, and Sancton had but just entered on his indentures. Otley, as nephew of one of the partners, and his future successor in the firm, held himself very loftily; he was a rather weak-minded youth in reality, though his strong passions had hitherto been regarded as signs of a strong character, and had a most exasperating air of condescension and patronage towards his juniors.

Robert Hawthorne, during the first week of their acquaintance, was irresistibly provoked by his assumption to laugh in his face, and then sturdily to set his authority aside, an act of rebellion which caused Otley to conceive for him a cold, malignant, jealous hatred which only lacked opportunity to develop itself. George Sancton was a lively, good-humoured boy of fourteen, with neither much talent nor much love of work, but he was a favourite in the office, and enjoyed some privileges as being the orphan son of a clerk who had met his death accidentally while engaged in the performance of his duty. George had a sister, Dorothea, who was five years older than himself, and the pair lived with Miss Kibblewhite, a maiden sister of their mother's, who supported herself and them by keeping a small tea and coffee shop in the market-place.

One more of Robert's new associates must be introduced by name, and then the narrative shall proceed. Old Tom Aldin was a man half crippled with rheumatism, with ragged white hair and beard, and an aspect unsavoury in the extreme: the only spark of lightness or brightness about

him was his eye, which glittered from under a shaggy, overhanging brow, as keenly as a hawk's. He was the most highly paid workman on the premises, for it was his office to watch the simmering of a valuable kind of varnish, and at the culminating point to turn it off the fire; a minute's neglect or carelessness, and the whole *brew* was spoilt. This task was carried on in a small walled court, half roofed over, where he sat by the seething pot, silently moving his lips and watching the dark mass like some ancient alchemist muttering his spells, and waiting for the grand projection, which was to confer upon him the Midas gift of turning base things into gold. Tom was unpopular, and deservedly so, for he was a most surly old fellow, though an invaluable servant; but even in that rude block there was a vein of true humanity: he had tamed a number of song thrushes to come and hop about the stifling little yard, and all round it he had constructed narrow borders where the flowers flourished marvellously, considering their atmosphere. He it was who showed to Robert on his first arrival all the machinery and store-

houses, and expatiated magnificently on the value of the business; he told him from what distant lands came this or that ingredient used in the manufactory, and almost impressed him with an idea that the world might cease to go round if a stoppage happened to Hawthorne and Co.

Some people regarded Tom Aldin as a sort of fossil curiosity, for he had begun to watch the varnish pot when he was quite a young man, and he was now so old that Mr. Reuben Otley was daily on the look-out for an opportunity of superseding him and giving him a retiring pension. Aldin had discovered this, and it was a rare amusement to the bystanders to watch the cunning game of fence that was carrying on between them; Mr. Reuben Otley being anxious to displace a faithful old servant whom he considered superannuated, and old Tom being utterly determined only to resign his charge over the pot when he resigned his life or his senses.

III.

Mr. Joshua Hawthorne's housekeeper took, at first, an enthusiastic liking to Robert, and so did he to her, but this pleasant state of things was not destined to be of any long continuance. Mrs. Eliotson was on a footing of equality with her master, presided at his table, and regulated his domestic expenses with sovereign sway; she had held her post for seven and twenty years, and was not likely to brook with equanimity a rival near the throne; such a rival she presently conceived Robert was inclined to be.

To a casual observer her face was extremely prepossessing, from its delicate softness of tint, the silvery braids of hair that shaded and the clear snowy borders that surrounded it; but on nearer study, the square strong jaw, the close thin-lipped mouth, the steel blue eye, hard and implacable, suggested a cruel, perhaps a vindictive temper. She was crafty, fond of rule, invincibly obstinate, and full of pious professions; the name of religion

was for ever on her lips, but it was in her practice never. She did not belong to the Society of Friends, though she had adopted their dress—adopted it, perhaps, because it was so respectable. She possessed a small library of medical books, left to her by her deceased husband, upon which she founded a claim to be regarded in her private circle as an authority on all subjects connected with the healing art, whether as applied to body or mind; especially, she was great upon insanity, which she asserted to be in most cases a mere fantastical assumption on the part of the patients, and out of which they deserved to be coerced by even severer discipline than was the common practice at this date. Add to this that her master considered her the treasure of her sex—a jewel of goodness, piety, amiability, and order—and an idea of her power and importance in his bachelor household may be faintly conceived; also it may be conceived that young Robert Hawthorne was in evil case when she elected herself as his enemy, not his *open* enemy, but his bitter concealed foe. Hatred, like a rank weed, grows fast in a corrupt heart, and in hers its fruitage soon ripened

into a determination to oust Robert from his place in his uncle's favour and liking before he was so firmly rooted there as to make the task one of difficulty ; and having a keen natural taste for intrigue, she entered upon her undermining persecutions with a secret and stealthy enjoyment.

Robert was no match for her astuteness ; being one of the most frank, straightforward dispositions in the world himself, he was never suspicious of others, and fell innocently into many a snare which she laid warily for his incautious feet. She contrived that he should frequently transgress, or *seem* to transgress, first one, and then another of his uncle's household regulations ; and when he was clear of all offence, she tried to poison the old man's mind against him, by insinuating that he was sly, and deceived them both.

It was some time before Robert saw what influence was working so stealthily against him, but gradually he perceived that his uncle's earlier kindness failed, that he was restricted of his liberty, watched and blamed when he was in no fault. So far, however, was he from tracing the disagreeable change to Mrs. Eliotson that he actually con-

sulted her as to what he should do and what avoid to give satisfaction.

The housekeeper repaid his confidence by telling her master that his nephew had been complaining to her of him, and Robert got, in consequence, a severe reproof for his ingratitude.

"Pussy is not fond of you," said George Sancton to him, using significantly the name which the apprentices had conferred on the housekeeper. "She is making mouse of you, I can see." Robert demanded explanation. "She has made mouse of many people before now," answered the sagacious youth; "which means, that she has clawed and bemaused them until she was tired of the game, and then scrunched them up skin and bone. If you don't believe me, ask Tom Aldin—he knows her."

Robert did not think fit to do anything of the kind, but having got the clue, he was not long at a loss to trace whence issued the paltry persecutions and annoyances to which he was subjected; and no sooner had he ascertained, beyond a doubt, that it was Mrs. Eliotson who did him constant disservice with her master, than he

forthwith challenged her to give him the reason why.

"What cause have you for trying to set my uncle against me, as I see you are doing, Mrs. Eliotson?" he asked, boldly.

"Set your uncle against you, Robert Hawthorne! You are under a delusion of the devil!" exclaimed she, flushing all over her calm, pale face. "Take care—*take care* of his wicked suggestions, or it will be the worse for you, both temporally and eternally!" She lifted a menacing finger, and looked very much as if she intended that it *should* be the worse for him—temporally, at least.

For a moment the singular change that passion operated in her features literally fascinated Robert's gaze; all the hateful power and malignancy of her nature frowned upon him from her baleful eyes. It was a declaration of war—which would win? Envy, jealousy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, officered by craft and skill, or simplicity, innocence, and high metal, led by their impetuous captains, youth and inexperience? There is no struggle more often

renewed in our world than this, and none where we have greater need to cry, "God defend the Right!"

IV.

For several weeks there had been a heaviness in the moral atmosphere at Messrs. Hawthorne and Co's. Everybody about the premises was more or less sensitive to its oppression, but none could conjecture in what quarter the storm was likely to burst. Both the partners, but especially Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, became of a sudden watchful and suspicious; the apprentices, the workmen, even Conny himself, found themselves under a perpetual surveillance. John Otley who, more than any other, was supposed to be in the secrets of the firm, manifested all this time an impatient restlessness which was not habitual to him. His visage, sallow and lean through premature dissipation, became anxious and fevered; and for the first occasion within anybody's remembrance, he was observed to be civil to his fellow apprentices, and to bear himself with al-

most abject humility towards old Tom Aldin. Speculation was rife in the office. Could the firm have experienced losses? Had the two heads quarrelled? Was it that John Otley, who looked so palpably wretched, was again teasing his uncle for leave to enter the army and be a gentleman at his expense, as the ambitious youth had been refused permission to do before? Or was Tom Aldin to be removed at last in spite of a threat to drown himself? No: Tom sat in the yard watching his *brew* and muttering to himself, but less disturbed than anybody. The old man was a spy both with eye and ear, and perhaps he was the only person who really knew what was preparing.

The cloud which now overshadowed the entire horizon had been, at first, a mere sign in the sky.

Early one morning Mr. Reuben Otley sought his partner with a vexed, mysterious face, saying—

“Hawthorne, there is something going wrong; we have got a thief amongst us, or I am very much mistaken.”

“Indeed! I am sorry to hear that. Whom

do you suspect?" cried the old gentleman, rising flurried from his half-finished breakfast, while Mrs. Eliotson stirred her tea composedly, and begged her master not to agitate himself, lest he should bring on an attack of gout.

"I have not the slightest idea who is the culprit, but let me tell you what has happened. About ten days since I found the desk in our room where we keep the bag with the men's wages *open*. The key had been turned in the lock without the lid having been closed down; I thought it was a carelessness of my own, and never mentioned it, for nothing appeared to have been disarranged, and there was no cause for suspicion. I, however, took special notice that the same accident did not occur again from my negligence—the desk does not shut readily, for the hinges seem to have had a strain, but the lock itself very easy. Imagine, then, my surprise this morning, when I found it open once more, and not only open, but the bag robbed of seven guineas, and then studiously retied, and laid where I left it. Nothing else had been disturbed. Now can you suggest who is the

thief? Who has access to that room besides ourselves?"

"Only Mr. Constant," replied Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, with a puzzled, reflective air.

"Only Mr. Hawthorne, Mr. Otley, and Mr. Constant," chimed in Mrs. Eliotson, "only those three by right, but I have seen John and Robert go in and out repeatedly. I saw Robert there no later ago than yesterday." She paused, and as her suggestion was not taken hold of as she perhaps anticipated it would be, she added: "But, of course, *they* would not touch anything. Your nephew we know so well, Mr. Otley, and as for Robert, though he is a deep boy, still I could scarcely prevail upon myself to believe——"

"Let us have the boys in at once, and question them," interrupted Mr. Hawthorne, impatiently.

"You are so impetuous, my dear master! you do not suppose that the individual who stole the money would confess it for the mere asking, do you?" said the housekeeper, with bland irony.

"Confession and punishment are what he will have to come to, madam!" returned Mr. Reuben Otley, brusquely.

Pussy was very obnoxious to him; he would rather have had *her* proved the thief and put out of the way than anybody else, for he lived in daily dread of her influencing his guileless partner in some weak moment to marry her.

"True, sir, true!" said she, with unprovokable calm; "but to bring him thereto you must temporize and watch. He is very sly."

"Who is very sly?" demanded Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, sharply.

"The thief, sir, whoever he may be," replied the housekeeper, with prompt evasiveness. She had distilled her drop of subtle venom and let it fall; she would trust to time and chance for its corrosive working in her master's mind: against his better reason, it already tainted Robert in his thoughts; and even clear-sighted Mr. Reuben Otley felt himself insensibly prejudiced against the lad by what she had so cautiously insinuated.

V.

The two partners sought old Tom Aldin in his shed, and told him what had happened. Tom was longer in the firm than either of them, and was the safest person to take into their confidence.

"A thief in the house of Hawthorne and Co. ! That's something new," said he, without lifting his eyes from the pot, "trust him to me, my masters, and I'll ferret him out. I'll tackle him !"

"You might leave the yard and loiter about seeing after the men, and Slater could attend to your work meantime," suggested Mr. Reuben Otley, who saw here a fine opportunity for displacing the old man without hurting his feelings. But Tom was too deep for him.

"Thank you kindly, master, all the same, but I couldn't take to loitering at my time of life; I must work till I drop," said he, with a wily grin. "Besides, if I'm to catch a thief I must not advertise mysel' as on the spy for him."

Mr. Reuben Otley reluctantly acquiesced, and

from that moment began Tom's surveillance, which, cloak it as he would, soon became patent to every one employed on the premises.

Mrs. Eliotson, with the natural inquisitiveness of her sex and order, often paid him a visit in the yard and probed him conversationally to find out what he had discovered; but Tom was more than a match for the housekeeper, and kept his own counsel. She suggested to him with an over-cautiousness that defeated itself, what she had previously tried to suggest to the partners about Robert. Tom appeared to swallow the bait avidly, but the next time she came to him he said, maliciously—

“You were a little bit suspicious about old master's nephew, Mrs. Eliotson, t' other day, so I'll set your good heart at rest. Whoever the thief *is* it *isn't* young Robert Hawthorne.”

“Well, I am glad to hear *that*, for I frankly confess that I had my suspicions about him,” replied she, with an ingenuous air, but with real disappointment at her heart. “You see, Tom, he came amongst us quite a stranger, none of us knowing anything about him.”

"I see a vast o' things, ma'am, and very kind of you it was to blacken the lad to the only friend he'd got—very kind indeed, ma'am, and just like you. When I saw old master looking so miserable, I knew who had been comforting him. Have you found out them words in your Bible about the folks whose buttery words is very swords? It's a fine saying yon—you should get it by heart, ma'am."

"You are disposed to be witty, Tom. When are we to lose your valuable services—on Saturday, is it not?" retorted she, with smiling spite.

"No, ma'am, I can't be spared yet; I maybe should have gone afore this if I had not had such a friend at court as yourself, but now there's a real delicate piece of work to do, Tom Aldin's found to be the lightest hand for it. Please to clear out of this, ma'am, you're in the way."

Tom's *brew* was at its climax, and he had no more talking time to bestow upon the house-keeper; so she picked a few of his finest flowers, and then returned towards her own domains. On the way she encountered Robert going in-

doors on a message from his uncle; the lad looked blithe and good-humoured enough, but at the sight of him such a spasm of fury and disappointment came over her that she would have liked to spit in his face. It was an immense effort of self-control on her part to pass him smiling and without a word.

VI.

Mrs. Eliotson had never sincerely thought that Robert Hawthorne *was* the thief, but her jealous hatred had insidiously tempted her to hope that he *might* be. So far had she suffered the desire of her heart to carry her imagination that in fancy she had seen him proved guilty and ignominiously exchanging the shelter of his uncle's house for a prison. Tom Aldin's assurance to her of his innocence was, therefore, about the most aggravating piece of intelligence that she could have received at the moment; she went into her parlour chewing the bitter cud and ruminating on it very wrathfully.

If I could preach as Deborah Eliotson preached, with fluency and force of metaphor, I should say that the devil went into the parlour with her, sat down and held a long conversation touching her dislike to Robert Hawthorne and her justifiableness in taking all and every means of getting him out of her way. I should say that he put such and such base thoughts into her mind, and clinched them all by showing how it only depended on her own craft and unscrupulousness to *make* the boy seem as guilty as she desired. Then I should take up the moral tone and show picturesquely the results of hearkening to his subtle whispers, and the almost impossibility of escaping from his delusions when we have once voluntarily yielded to them. But the fact is, that I am afraid to take his name in vain, or to treat him with such familiarity as she dared to do: indeed, she spoke of him so often that Tom Aldin said he was quite certain she did not believe in him, or if she believed in him, it was only as grown-up folks believe in the bogles which frighten their childhood, but were now found out to be mytha.

“Get some money out of the bag and hide it in

Robert Hawthorne's box ; get some money out of the bag and hide it in Robert Hawthorne's box ; *get some money out of the bag and hide it in Robert Hawthorne's box,*" said some secret voice, which made her first feel rather chill and then very hot. "Do it to-night, do it to-night, *do it to-night.*" It kept on growing louder at every repetition ; and at last she put away her respectable work and answered impatiently—

"Yes, yes, I'll do it to-night," in a flurried, suspicious way.

She sat in her chair doing nothing for nearly an hour after that. At first there was a disagreeable quivering in her flesh and a tendency to glance round and round the room with unsteady eye and knitted brow, but presently she regained her composure, and dozed off with folded white hands lying innocently upon her apron. Was it the devil, I wonder, who had suggested such a pretty bit of wicked work for them to do by and by ? She did not slumber easily ; her lips went, and a sort of twittering convulsion distorted the muscles of her face : it was singular what a stealthy, disagreeable expression there was on her uncon-

scious countenance, which when awake and watchful was so placid and benign. When she woke up it was to see Robert Hawthorne standing opposite to her, and regarding her with a puzzled steadfastness. Her first impulse was to order him away, but her habitual caution coming to her aid, she only stroked her hands, yawned, said something about being overtaken by drowsiness in the warm weather, and then took up a pious book and began to read. After a few minutes of this edifying exercise, she looked up from the consolatory page, and asked Robert if he wanted anything particular that he stayed loitering about there in office hours.

"I want to ask my uncle to let me go home with George Sancton to tea. I thought I should find my uncle here," was the lad's reply.

"Oh! I can give you permission to go home with George Sancton. I will tell your uncle where you are gone, so you need not wait for his coming in: he went up the town, and may be some time away," said the housekeeper; and as Robert, pleased at his holiday evening, went out of the room, she laughed to herself in a satisfied

way and whispered, perhaps to the ear of her familiar devil—"Well, surely nothing could have happened more opportunely!"

VII.

Never had Mistress Deborah Eliotson talked in a more edifyingly pious and moral tone than she talked that night when her master brought in Mr. Reuben Otley to eat his muffin at her tea-table; and never had credulous, kindly old Joshua Hawthorne felt more fully persuaded that she was at once the most admirable, the most excellent, and the cleverest of women.

As if her friend, the found-out sham, had done his best to make his choice bit of work easy to her hand, it happened that after tea her master sent her with his keys into his room, adjoining the office, as he had done many a time before, to fetch in a new pamphlet which he had bought for her perusal and left in the desk. These were the days of pamphlets and pamphleteers: Deborah Eliotson took an immense interest in these ephemeral pro-

ductions, and the more scurrilously violent they were against existing dignities the better she liked them.

Both clerks and apprentices were gone, and the office was as silent as the grave; nevertheless, Mrs. Deborah's heart beat fast, and her ear listened suspiciously towards the door as she fitted the key into the lock of the desk; in a moment it was turned, the lid was raised, the bag lifted out and untied, and a handful of mixed gold and silver clutched and slipped into her capacious pocket. She did not stay to reclose the bag, but snatching up the pamphlet, she locked the desk and rushed hastily back into the house, quite unconscious of the silent ecstasies of delight which were half strangling old Tom Aldin as he watched her through a broken pane of the smoke and dust darkened skylight.

Every night for three weeks back had the persevering spy taken his airy exercise upon the roof—this day with signal success. He had discovered that there were *two* thieves in the employ of Messrs. Hawthorne and Co., and to have found out that Pussy, his favourite aversion, was one of

them, almost exalted him out of his discretion. He would have richly enjoyed pouncing upon her there and then, but he had acquired a keen relish for his office of detective, and having an intuitive certainty that she would carry on her nefarious operations in superior style, his professional curiosity was excited to study them. Instead, therefore, of immediately communicating with his master and reaping his deserved crop of glories, he stayed watching until night-fall, and then chuckled his way to bed; revelling in the anticipation of how he would slow-torture Pussy on the morrow if he got the chance.

When Mrs. Eliotson reappeared in the parlour with her pamphlet, she looked rather flushed and out of breath; she had made a rapid journey to the top of the house, and poured the contents of her pocket into Robert Hawthorne's box, and covered the money with some of poor Mary's linen that she had made for her boy. The two old gentlemen noticed the flurry of her manner, and Mr. Joshua said, in his careful comfortable way—

“Why don't you use young Betsy's feet to run

upstairs, Mrs. Eliotson? You and I ought to begin to save ourselves—we are not so active as we have been.”

“I have not been upstairs, sir,” replied she, without hesitation, and then opened the pamphlet and began to read.

The partners were talking about the first theft from the money bag, and saying that it had not been repeated. She listened intently.

“Tom Aldin is very close, but I believe he has got an inkling of the culprit at last,” said Mr. Reuben Otley. “He will be certain, however, before he speaks. He gave me a hint to-day, and asked if I was still as intent on punishing the thief. I told him ‘Yes,’ if it was my own brother’s son he should not escape; so he said—

“Then have patience, master, just a little bit longer, or you will spoil all. I’m next to sure I know him, and as soon as I can put my finger on him for certain I’ll do it. Tom is to be trusted.”

“Yes, yes, Tom is to be trusted, Tom is to be trusted,” replied Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, uneasily,

"but the suspense makes me wretched, I'd part with all I possess, rather than it should turn out to be poor Mary's boy."

"I suppose the young men's desks have been subjected to search?" said Mrs. Eliotson, in a casual manner, and without lifting her eyes from her book.

"Yes, but nothing suspicious was found in any. They all submitted to it with perfect frankness, disagreeable as the ordeal must have been to the honest high-spirited young fellows. I assure you I was ashamed to have to propose such a course," replied Mr. Joshua Hawthorne.

"The thief would most likely convey his spoils home, and hide them there," again suggested the housekeeper's meek tones. Her master fidgeted about on his seat, and Mr. Reuben Otley kept the velvet-pawed Pussy under his eye.

"She knows something," thought he.

"Where is Robert gone? it seems as if he avoided me," said the elder partner; and Mrs. Eliotson answered that he had gone home with George Sancton to drink tea.

A long and painful pause ensued, which was

broken by Mr. Joshua Hawthorne saying hoarsely, while his fine old face quivered with pain—

“Whether rightly or wrongly, there is amongst us three a feeling of suspicion against my poor young nephew; he is out of the way: suppose, Mrs. Eliotson, you go and examine his room—if he is guilty, there may be found tokens of it.”

He could not say any more, and the house-keeper, with what seemed even to Mr. Reuben Otley an unfeeling alacrity, departed on her mission. The two partners sat silent until her return, which was very speedy; they that hide can find; and ere she had been gone five minutes, she reappeared with her apron gathered up in her hand, and the miscellaneous coin which she had taken from the bag, and deposited in the box, rattling as she walked. With a grievously solemn countenance she poured it upon the table, and said:

“I found all that thrown loosely in amongst Robert Hawthorne’s clothes—of course, I do not know what money of his own he had, but perhaps you do?” appealing to her master.

The old gentleman said that to his knowledge the

lad had little or none, and meanwhile Mr. Reuben Otley was narrowly examining piece after piece of the coin. At last he ceased his examination, and replied to his partner's questioning look :

"I am afraid the case is but too clear against him, there are several of the pieces of marked money that I put into the bag last Saturday."

"Well, I would not have credited it on any evidence less clear!" tremulously exclaimed old Joshua Hawthorne. "I should have said that truth and honesty were inscribed upon his countenance."

"Appearances are deceitful," quoted Mr. Reuben Otley from one of the blue and gilt papers on the office walls.

Pussy looked on, so demure and so pious, enjoying stealthily the success of her intrigue, but she had not the supreme satisfaction of hearing at once how the firm intended to act; for after a few sentences of surprise, regret, and very natural indignation, her master and his partner went away together, the former turning round at the door to say, "Mrs. Eliotson, you will oblige us by not letting anything that has been

this evening discovered transpire. You will not speak to Robert about it if you please."

The housekeeper acquiesced, and when she was left alone, she betook herself to her pamphlets with that sense of ease and repose which follows on the accomplishment of an arduous and dangerous task.

VIII.

The following day at a quarter before noon the great bell which warned the men at Messrs. Hawthorne and Co.'s to begin and leave off work, resounded through house, yard, and shops, and as previously concerted, every man and boy employed on the premises repaired to the private room of the head of the firm, each respectfully doffing his cap as he entered the presence of his masters. Old Tom Aldin came last, wearing a most sullen and aggrieved countenance, but his eyes brightened with a gay malignancy as he perceived Pussy, sleek of visage, and purring delightedly over the anticipated disgrace of her

rival. He gave her a queer glance and a nod imperceptible except to herself, which made her colour waver a little and her pulse beat many degrees faster; but she immediately recovered herself and hurled him back a defiant stare, which only caused him to drop his chin upon his breast and laugh inaudibly. That gesture of his gave her a feeling of deadly sickness, and if an evil wish could have killed, Tom Aldin would at that moment have become the victim of an apoplectic seizure, and would never have spoken word more.

Mr. Reuben Otley had possession of the desk, and was evidently to be the spokesman of the assembly; for his elder partner sat in the great chair looking enfeebled and prostrate, and deaf even to the dulcet whispers of Pussy. Robert was grieved to see his uncle so ill. When he went near to inquire why it was, the old man waved him back impatiently, and averted his face, while the housekeeper launched at him a glance of the direst contempt.

"Are we all here?" began Mr. Reuben Otley, glancing from under his heavy black brows at the various expressions of wonderment and im-

patience depicted on the lines of faces before him.

"Are we all here?"

"Yes, sir, all," replied Conny, who had silently checked off upon a list each individual as he entered the room. Mr. Reuben Otley cleared his sonorous voice, and recommenced—

"You are gathered for a solemn purpose—an event has occurred, a crime has been committed under this roof such as has never before taken place since I became a partner in the firm of Hawthorne and Co. Men, we have a *thief* amongst us."

There was a pause of awful silence during which any one might have heard a pin fall. Some of the workpeople glanced aside at their neighbours, but there was no token of guilty alarm amongst them; only Robert Hawthorne stood a little in advance of the first rank, his colour raised and eyes dilated at the sudden and to his mind terrible announcement. Poor old Joshua Hawthorne stretched out his limbs as if he were enduring tortures, and breathed audibly, while Pussy patted his arm to soothe him, looking herself all the while as benign and innocent as a cherub.

Mr. Reuben Otley went on. "Yes, I repeat

it—we have a thief amongst us, but he is *known*—he is **KNOWN**.” A slight rustle in the rear of the crowd, and a suppressed murmur of satisfaction, followed this declaration. “You are all aware of our rule—you all understand our principle—it is justice that one diseased sheep should perish rather than the whole flock should incur the risk of becoming tainted. Our house must be purged of the knave instantly, but in deference to the urgent representations of my partner, who pleads the offender’s youth, I have consented to this. If he choose to stand forth now in the presence of you all, whom his misconduct might have brought under suspicion, and confess his guilt, he shall be permitted to leave us, unpunished save by a sound horse-whipping from our carter; but if he will *not*—he must abide the awful consequences of being delivered up into the hands of the law. Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, I speak your determination as well as my own, do I not?”

“Yes, yes,” replied the old man, with a miserable glance towards Robert, who began to notice Pussy’s watchful eye upon himself as if she

were, indeed, to use George Sancton's expressive phrase, 'making mouse of him,' and enjoying the process intensely.

"We give him five minutes to make up his mind. Jem Driver, you have brought your horse-whip as you were bidden to do?" added Mr. Reuben Otley, like the awful voice of fate, as he took out his big silver watch and laid it on the desk between himself and his partner. For the space of three minutes there was a dead silence; then from a remote corner of the room where John Otley had hidden himself there spoke a hoarse whining voice—

"Uncle Reuben, if you will only forgive me this once I promise faithfully never to touch the money bag again;" and the culprit slowly trailed himself into the open space before his petrified relative as the ranks of the men fell apart to let him pass.

Both the partners seemed struck dumb, and Mr. Reuben Otley glared at his nephew with starting stony eyes. It was several minutes before he found a voice to speak, and when he could utter at last, all he said was, "What! are there *two* of you? Are *you* a thief, John?"

The lad, quaking and looking every inch a mean dastard, began to cry and excuse himself.

"No, master, there's *not* two of 'em," interposed Tom Aldin, gruffly. "The other did not put the money where it was found."

By this time Mr. Reuben Otley had recovered himself from his paralysis of surprise and worked himself into a passion.

"You base knave!" cried he, in a trembling tone; "did you try to screen yourself by implicating another? I will not listen to a word. You are my dear dead brother's son, but you shall not escape. Jem Driver, do what I bade you! Use a vigorous arm; don't spare him!" And flinging open the door into the yard which adjoined the office, he drove his nephew forth, crying and entreating until the willing application of the whip changed his whine into a most dolorous howl.

Nobody lifted up a word for the thief; indeed one or two showed signs of enjoying his punishment until they saw the uncontrollable agonized working of his uncle's face. Every lash cut far deeper into his proud old heart than it did into the

culprit's flesh: it was terrible to see a man of his strong, hard character so moved. Indeed, he was stung in those feelings where he was most tender—in his love for his only relative, a lad who ought to have been bound to him by every sentiment of gratitude and affection, and in his public and often boasted reputation of a moral guardian to the young men under his care. The latter wound was, perhaps, the sorer of the two. Mr. Joshua Hawthorne was even more visibly stirred than his partner, and Pussy was as white as the well-starched kerchief folded over her bosom. The internal condition of that bosom was by no means to be envied, stabbed as it was metaphorically by old Tom Aldin's significant glances. She felt sure that by some means or other he had witnessed her feat of the night before, and she writhed justly under his power of exposing her.

Jem Driver's arm must have ached before he was bidden to cease the merited punishment, and John Otley, bruised and sore, was permitted to slink out of sight. Mr. Joshua Hawthorne then took his partner's arm and led him away in silence, though neither of them could forbear looking

after the whipped hound with a yearning of pity. They had grown into a habit of liking him, of boasting of his cleverness, and of regarding him as one of their successors in the firm; and his uncle, so to speak, never held up his head as proudly or was quite himself again after this disgrace. Pussy followed her master, scarcely able to realize that the morning's play was played out; but at the doorway she glanced stealthily back towards Tom Aldin, who was talking to Robert, and the shrewd malicious old fellow looked at her in return so blankly, that she could if she liked delude herself into the belief that her first fear was unfounded, and that he, like others who had been told of the discovery in Robert's box, would imagine that John Otley had conveyed the money there, when detection was at hand, to screen himself.

Tom was not troubled with any abstract ideas of justice, and not perceiving that John was any the worse off for bearing the weight of Pussy's crime in addition to his own, he said not a word on the matter, being determined to indemnify himself for previous disappointment by slow-tor-

turing his feline-tempered foe for some time to come. A slight lifting of the eyebrow, a side-long, significant glance, a twist of his ugly mouth, a single meaning word, were sufficient to double the speed of the respectable housekeeper's pulse, and to make her shake in her silver-buckled shoes. She would have been a far wiser, and in the long run a far happier woman, if she could have humbled herself to confess her sins to her master and to accept the inevitable disgrace. The purgatory Tom Aldin kept her in was a heavier punishment even for her guilt.

IX.

And she had yet more to endure than *that*. She underwent a frightful shock about a month after the grand scene of justice in the partner's room. It happened that Robert Hawthorne mislaid or lost a favourite knife which, besides being a knife, was a corkscrew, a button-hook, and several other instruments, and in search of it he turned out upon his bedroom floor all the

contents of that box into which Mrs. Eliotson had thrown the money abstracted from the desk. He did not find the missing article, but he found instead Pussy's pocket nutmeg-grater about which he had repeatedly heard her making inquiries during the last few weeks. He was puzzled to conjecture how it could have come there, and carrying it down stairs into the parlour where his uncle was sitting before the big Bible ready to read family prayers when all the household were assembled, he offered it to Mrs. Eliotson, saying—

“I found your nutmeg-grater in my box; I wonder how it got there. Uncle Joshua, do you know that John Otley persists in declaring that it was not he who hid the money in my box?”

“I have forbidden you to hold any communication with John Otley, Robert,” replied the old man, mildly; “he who would do the one bad deed would do the other. A thief would have no scruples about shuffling off his guilt on the shoulders of an innocent person.”

As his uncle was speaking Robert's eye rested

on Pussy's face; she changed colour and her hand jerked aimlessly about amongst the cups and saucers standing ready for breakfast. The master's words reassured her, and, putting her treacherous nutmeg-grater into its rightful receptacle, she said:

"I was arranging your clothes for you a little while since, and must have dropped it then. I wish you would try to keep your things more neatly, Robert; a boy of your age should seek to acquire tidy habits."

Mr. Joshua Hawthorne murmured acquiescence, and the two female servants of the house entering with a curtsy, prayers began. Robert knelt down in an extraordinary state of bewilderment, and never recovered his self-possession all through breakfast. A most outrageous suspicion had entered into his mind:

"I do believe," said he to himself, "that it was Pussy, and nobody else, who put that money into my box!"

Meeting with a private opportunity during the morning, he actually mentioned his suspicions to old Tom Aldin, but Tom burst into a loud

guffaw, and ironically advised him to give them full publicity by way of testing the housekeeper's power of pious refutation in making such an accusation recoil upon himself. So Robert held his peace, and avenging fate still left Mistress Deborah Eliotson to the tender mercies of wicked old Tom Aldin.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

KINSFOLK AND FRIENDS.

“THERE are youthful dreamers,
 Building castles fair, with stately stairways,
 Asking blindly
 Of the future what it cannot give them.”

LONGFELLOW.

I.

MEANWHILE, Cyrus Hawthorne was away in London with Sir Philip Nugent. The lad was very happy in his new life, and wrote long, flourishing, affectionate accounts of it to his brother. He possessed a thousand luxuries and a thousand indulgences of which he was likely to feel only too keen an appreciation. There had been some idea of sending him to Eton or Harrow, but on further consideration, and for very obvious reasons, Sir Philip finally decided on giving him

a home education. One Reverend Samuel Miles was elected to the office of his tutor, and that gentleman could have borne truthful testimony to the youngster's imperious temper as well as to his fine talents. Poor Mary Hawthorne had indulged her darling very much, and Sir Philip Nugent gave him no check. In fact, he soon conceived for him an overweening pride and affection. Cyrus possessed those gifts of nature which attract love in an uncommon degree.

His brother's letter showed Robert an immense contrast between their two lives. Cyrus was in the height of prosperity—seeing good company, free of a luxurious home, reaping the advantages of a careful education, while he was leading a plain, hard-working existence, exposed to the mean tyranny of Mistress Deborah Eliotson, and finding all his relaxation in a country walk with George Sancton. No wonder if he were inclined to think his brother had drawn the happier lot. It was not in a boastful spirit that Cyrus wrote, but he certainly did make the best of everything in those letters of his, though he had his mortifications and vexations much the same as Robert. His

left-handed kinship to Sir Philip Nugent was not long in oozing out, and there were some amongst his young gentleman companions who could hurl at him a stinging rebuke, upon occasion, if his insolent superiority aggrieved them; and the Reverend Samuel Miles had known him reject their society for a week after one of these cuts, until the tingling soreness wore off.

Sir Philip's own people—his mother, his aunt, Lady Leigh, and his presumptive heir Mr. Nugent of the Leasowes—were early made aware of the rumours of his having taken an illegitimate son to bring up under his own roof. The matter was spoken of in quiet corners without any intensity of reprobation. "Sir Philip Nugent had been rather wild in his youth; he had made a miserable marriage, and that explained it, but he was doing his best to atone for his errors now." Very few persons knew Mary Hawthorne's real history; and even had it been known universally, no doubt he would have found his apologists. It has been said that in love and war all stratagems are allowable, and in the earlier part of this present century the general tone of morals was looser, perhaps,

than it is now. Sir Philip never had belonged to the straitest sect, and probably he felt, with the majority of people, that he was performing a meritorious deed in openly taking Cyrus into his own hands; that the boy was beautiful, spirited, and of remarkably fine parts, made the virtuous act also pleasant.

There was no particular bent given to the lad's education, which was a grave error. The Reverend Samuel Miles was a scholar and a gentleman, but he was a thoroughly unpractical person, and like old Master Scrope at Chinelyn, he was disposed to think more reverently of his pupil's verse-making and occasional sparks of originality than they deserved. If Cyrus had been heir to an earldom—heir, in fact, to his father's kingdom—he would probably have been less flattered and spoilt. With elder people, while he was young, his position was a reason the more for letting him go unchecked: "Poor fellow," they would half compassionately observe, "his proud spirit will get a fall soon enough." In reality it got more falls already than any one but Mr. Miles suspected, for Cyrus was learning

to be secretive as to his feelings, and winced many a time when he said never a word.

II.

There were three play-fellows of his, sons of Mr. Nugent of the Leasowes, boys of his own age or thereabouts, into whose minds the ideas of succession and property had early entered. They were ordinary good-natured lads as a rule, but Cyrus and they rarely met without a quarrel, and one day this quarrel ended in a fight. No doubt the young Leasowes Nugents were jealous of Cyrus, who could beat them at all manner of games as well as all manner of lessons, who was so handsome, and such a personal favourite, especially with women, and who had so many more indulgences than themselves. And, no doubt, Cyrus presumed on his decisive superiority to laud it over them more than was at all times pleasant. Alfred, the eldest of the three brothers, generally bore his vapouring with a magnanimous equanimity, but one hot day, when

all their tempers were chafed about the disputed issue of a certain race, he was provoked to say :

“Take your fling, Cyrus, you’ll have to knock under by and by. You were never made to be master long, you know.”

“What do you mean?” cried Cyrus, in a fume.

“Gently, soh gently,” retorted the other, as if he were soothing a restive horse. “High spirit does not always show pure breeding. But you are a sort of cousin, Cyrus, and as I am above showing malice, when I come to my kingdom, I’ll make you my bailiff.”

This was more than Cyrus could endure. Half blind with rage, he flung himself upon his antagonist, and in the shock both came to the ground. It was not a scientific fight, but it was one in which some very vengeful blows were exchanged, and both combatants got considerably mauled. Mr. Miles witnessed the struggle from his bed-chamber window, and when it had gone on long enough for the letting of any ill blood there was between them, he walked out and interfered.

"You fight like a cat!" screamed young Alfred, wiping the blood from a long scratch with which Cyrus had embellished his nose; "I wish we had you at Eton—we would soon teach you the right use of fists!"

In fact, there was a gleam of tigerish ferocity in Cyrus's dilated eyes, and a white foam on his livid lips. Mr. Miles deemed it expedient to take his pupil's arm and lead him away, and when he came to his senses he gave him a lecture, by which he would have done well to profit. The lively letters to Robert contained no allusion to incidents of this nature, so that he was quite justified in believing that his brother led a life of perpetual sunshine, and he was very glad so to believe.

It was at the Leasowes that the fight took place, but, that and the quarrels notwithstanding, the young Nugents were not altogether unfavourably disposed towards their left-hand cousin. Sir Philip Nugent had now been some time a widower, and perfectly eligible to marry again; but his having taken Cyrus home was the strongest pledge that he did not intend it. The

Leasowes Nugents, as his heirs presumptive, were, of course, more deeply interested in the matter than anybody else, and their father instructed them always to defer to Cyrus, at least when he was their guest. Sir Philip lived on the best terms with his cousin, but when he heard of the fight, and the taunt that originated it, he was extremely angry. It was not Cyrus who told, but Jack, the youngest brother, and Master Alfred would have been summarily dismissed out of the way of further mischief, to finish his holidays at his grandmother Bedingfield's, had not Cyrus himself spoken against such a silly and unjust proceeding. But though too proud or too generous to permit any one else to avenge his affront, Cyrus neither forgot nor forgave it.

III.

About the same time as the fight occurred at the Leasowes there occurred to Robert at Walton Minster an incident which might have exercised a sinister influence on his fortunes, had

he not possessed fortitude and self-denial enough to set its immediate and apparent advantages aside.

From his youth upwards he had a tendency to make friends of womankind—a softness left to him, perhaps, from his recollections of his mother; and his two earliest, in his adopted country were old-maid Kibblewhite, at the little tea and coffee shop on the western corner of the market-place, and her niece Dorothea.

The first time he went home to tea with George Sancton, arriving about ten minutes past five, he found Miss Kibblewhite posting up her day-book at the desk behind the counter, perched on a tall stool, with her little stuff slippers at least half a yard from the floor. She got down deliberately, and gave Robert a kindly ceremonious welcome. Next to King George the Third and the Royal family, the old lady thought the firm of Messrs. Hawthorne and Co. the most important and honourable house in the empire. As there was no customer in view at that late hour, she bade an errand boy of minute proportions “keep the shop,” and herself led the way upstairs to

the best parlour, which had a sunshiny bay-window overlooking the market-place.

"George has prevailed on his young friend, Robert Hawthorne, to come and drink his tea with us this evening, Dorothea," she said, addressing a young woman, who leant over a great embroidery frame, at work upon a shepherd-boy piping to his flocks beside a very blue and very impetuous cascade.

Dorothea rose, performed a curtsey after the fashion of fifty years ago, and then sat down again. Robert felt as if he had fallen into very fine company indeed, and, carefully balancing himself on the edge of a hard, faded tapestry settee, he responded in his best tone and manner to the precise little catechism of inquiries touching his own health, his uncle's health, Mrs. Deborah Eliotson's health, and that of all his other kinsfolk and friends with whom he could only communicate by letter. Then he detailed his impressions of Walton Minster, and described Chinelyn and the Manor Farm, and almost before he was aware he found himself talking enthusiastically of his dear brother Cyrus, and the days at home,

while Miss Kibblewhite listened with sympathizing interest, and her little bird-like head gently inclined to one side.

Dorothea listened also with a smile on her pleasant face. She was a fine young woman, healthy and blooming, not pretty, perhaps, but agreeable and comely to look at with her bright, brown eyes, ruddy cheek, and clear skin, contrasted by a crop of rich dark curls confined by a sky-blue ribbon. She had a sincere countenance, and her glance betrayed a sparkling vivacity of temper; but with all her air and brightness of youth she had a resemblance that was almost ludicrous to the old-maid Kibblewhite, her aunt, whose complexion was as dry as dust and her shape about as symmetrical as the market pump. Robert Hawthorne took to Dorothea Sancton at the first glance, and Dorothea took to him. She was a serviceable clever girl, such as boys like and like to look up to, but never conceive a sentimental fancy for. There was no aroma of romance about her, but everything that was useful and homely. All her acquaintance were in the habit of claiming her help at family festivals. No marriage

party was esteemed complete unless her face beamed from some nook of the room upon it; no christening party was ever made up in her absence, and when death and sorrow got into a house she was more frequently sent for in her office of comforter than any one else. But—and Dorothea could not help sometimes wondering how and why it was—no suitor had yet come to woo in Miss Kibblewhite's cosy parlours, and Dorothea was as fancy free at fair nineteen as she was on the day when she was born.

She presently departed to prepare tea, and after about twenty minutes' absence she returned to announce that it was ready downstairs; so the boys followed Miss Kibblewhite to a little room communicating with the shop by a half-glass door, and also looking upon a gravelled court of about twelve feet square that was fragrant with mignonette. Dorothea presided over the tray, and dispensed the slices of seed-cake liberally; while her aunt sat at one side of the table, ready to sally forth and serve a customer, should any such appear during the progress of the meal.

Old Miss Kibblewhite believed in all the severer proprieties, and was evidently used to keep the

young people in capital order, for Dorothea was as mute as a mouse in her presence, and George indulged none of his mischievous monkeyish vivacity. She held as an axiom that children should be seen and not heard, at their meals especially; but she talked with great fluency herself, and chiefly in an anecdotic manner, about her father and mother and grandfather and grandmother respectively, back to the days when George I. was king, all the three young people listening with an undemonstrative interest. When tea was over, however, she relaxed her dignity, and as Dorothea was putting on a large bibbed apron to cover her gown while she washed the best gilt china, which had honoured Robert Hawthorne's visit, the old lady took it from her hands, and, resolutely investing her own square little person in its ample folds, she said,

"No, Dorothea. You will amuse the boys better than I. Let them go upstairs and look out of the window, or let them have the dominoes and cribbage-board, but" (this in a whisper aside) "take care they do not touch anything to spoil it."

There was some laughing as the three went upstairs, glad of their release from playing at Grave-

airs, which made prim little Miss Kibblewhite feel doubtful of the propriety of leaving them to themselves, but when they reached the parlour it suddenly ceased.

The evening sun was shining in at one corner of the bay-window, across where the embroidery frame stood with a richly variegated fringe of scarlet, orange, purple, white, and green skeins of floss silk hanging from its pegs. But that bit of lustrous, brilliant colour did not absorb all the light and radiant glow. It seemed to rally chiefly round a little figure perched aloft in Dorothea's high chair—a little figure wagging a pair of small feet impatiently, and whose loose wandering curls had netted a sheaf of the golden rays at least. This little figure had a face soft and fair as a white flower, and lips always pouting for a kiss. It was a dimpled face, and ought to have been sunshiny by rights, but at this moment it was full of a child's most pathetic sorrowfulness. A straw hat lay on the carpet beside her, and her gay poppy-coloured sash, which she had fretted and untied, hung trailing on the dull gray floor. She was as pretty a picture of somebody's toy and rebellious pet as you could

see on the longest summer day ; but there was something about her that betrayed she was not a *mother's* darling ; poor little Lilian had no mother ; she was only a great lady's adopted child.

Dorothea Sancton, however, loved her very tenderly, and sprang towards her with outstretched arms and a cry of eager delight.

“Oh ! Lilian, how came you here all alone ?” then couching her in her lap, with the pretty fair head pressed up against her bosom, she kissed her on lips and cheek and brow with an enthusiasm of affection. The child was used to this idolatry and liked it. She nestled one tiny fat hand round Dorothea's neck, and with the other began to tangle her orderly tiers of curls, whilst she lisped out an explanation of her appearance there, with a pretty preciseness of speech which showed how carefully the little maiden was taught and how diligent and painstaking she was herself :

“Lady Leigh took me to the evening prayers, and left me here as she went through the market-place to see her widows. She will call for me, and to look at the shepherd as she returns home. The house door was open and I came

upstairs by myself." There was a whimpering tremulousness in her tone, however, which would have convinced Dorothea that something was amiss, had not the cloudy little face betrayed it already. She tried to divert her by exhibiting the gay shepherd; but, for once, the child was not inclined to notice him. "My father played the anthem," said she, beginning to cry. "Oh! Dorothea, I want to go home to my father! I want to go home!" She twisted herself round from the contemplation of the rosy-cheeked boy, and hid her eyes against Dorothea's neck. The little heart had been filling before, now it overflowed. She did not care for the shepherd, his flock, his pipe, his crook, or his cascade any more. She had heard her father making beautiful, grand music on the Minster organ, and all she wanted was to go home to him.

Dorothea was frightened by this tender, passionate outbreak, and tried various methods of consolation in vain.

"Hush, my darling, hush; you will spoil your pretty eyes!" Lilian cared nothing for her eyes at this moment, except as they were useful to

cry with. "Lady Leigh will come, and she will be *so* grieved to see you. You love Lady Leigh?" Oh, yes! Lilian loved Lady Leigh, but she loved her father better, and she wanted to go home—she wanted to go home. "But," persisted Dorothea, almost at her wits' end, "if you go home you will have to work as I do, but Lady Leigh will have you taught, and made clever like herself."

"I would rather be like you, Dorothea; I love you more than Lady Leigh. I do not want to be like her."

Dorothea signed to George that he should come and try to divert the little rebel's thoughts; and, after a few minutes' shy study of Robert Hawthorne, who had approached with him, she condescended to let the two boys chair her round the room upon their crossed arms, and was presently laughing far more loudly than she had cried before. In the midst of the game, while Robert was pronouncing a mimic oration in the little queen's praise, the door opened, and, ushered by Miss Kibblewhite, entered my Lady Leigh, a very tall, imposing, aristocratic dame, with powdered hair and a dress of sombre magni-

ficence. She paused just inside the door, leaning upon a gold-headed stick, and, glancing sharply round the room, demanded—

“Whose voice was it that I heard but just now as I came upstairs?”

“It was Robert Hawthorne who was speaking, my lady,” replied Dorothea, dropping a deferential curtsy.

“And who is Robert Hawthorne, pray? Any relative of old Joshua Hawthorne, the varnish-maker in Maiden Lane?”

“Yes, my lady; and a fellow apprentice to the firm with my nephew, George Sancton,” said Miss Kibblewhite, with deep respect.

“His voice reminded me of Sir Philip Nugent’s,” cried the lofty dame, advancing heavily into the room, each step accentuated by a thud of the gold-headed stick. She honoured Robert with a prolonged, scrutinizing stare, from which she did not release him, though a flush of angry confusion darkened his countenance. “And his face reminds me of Sir Philip’s also, more now than at the first glance. Where were you bred, Robert Hawthorne?”

"At Chinelyn," replied the lad, reluctantly.

"At Chinelyn! I ought to have some recollection of Chinelyn," mused Lady Leigh, with a suspicious sidelong look at his face. "Yes; 'tis a little fishing village on the coast of Wight." She turned away abruptly, and bade Dorothea exhibit her work.

"I am sure, my lady, Robert Hawthorne can tell you anything you wish to know about it. We have been quite pleased with his talk ourselves," suggested Miss Kibblewhite.

"No need. I remember now what puzzled me in the name before. Have you any brother, Robert Hawthorne?"

"Yes, madam; I have a brother Cyrus."

Lady Leigh stood several minutes commenting on the embroidery, but evidently without thinking of what she said, for her stern eyes were looking Robert Hawthorne over from head to foot, and her last act before leaving the room was to glance back over her shoulder at his face again, as if she wished to fix an indelible portrait of his features in her mind.

Robert Hawthorne was not philosopher enough

to reason on the fortuitous course of events, and this sudden rencontre with Lady Leigh mortified him excessively. Whether judiciously or not, Mr. Joshua Hawthorne had concealed from Robert that he was living in the midst of his father's people, and her recognition of him was a sharp stroke indeed. During the temporary absence of Miss Kibblewhite and Dorothea, who had accompanied Lady Leigh and the child downstairs, he was glad to accept George Sancton's challenge to a game at dominoes, and to sit down opposite to his less observant comrade, to hide his disturbance from question on their return. But Lady Leigh's behaviour had struck Miss Kibblewhite as so singular that she could not refrain from making some remark upon it.

"How very odd of her ladyship to find a resemblance to her nephew in Robert Hawthorne," said she; "I never heard her notice any one else in the same way before. But I am sure, Dorothea, I myself saw something in his features that struck me as familiar, though I should never have thought of Sir Philip Nugent, if Lady Leigh had not named him."

Dorothea said, "Indeed, aunt," and nothing more, for where she sat she could see the red tide of painful confusion rising into the lad's face again.

"What are you about, Robert? it is your turn to play," said George Sancton, and some other subject intervening, Miss Kibblewhite's attention was called away.

IV.

It was a very lovely evening; and by and by, Dorothea, tiring of her embroidery frame, suggested that it was a pity to let it pass without taking a walk; the two boys being of the same mind, they all sallied forth and went out of the town, across an ancient bridge of one arch spanning the river Gled, beyond which lay a stretch of ripening meadows and rich pasture land, with a pleasant country road winding through them. Robert Hawthorne had now been several months at Walton Minster, but he had never before strayed so far as Dorothea led him that evening.

He had scarcely dreamed of finding such luxurious green shade of woods and such musical brooks within a walk of the smoke and squalor of the ancient city. The v'illages, farmsteads, and solitary labourer's cottages they passed all wore a thriving aspect, and Robert having made some remark to that effect, Dorothea said—

“It is the same all over the Hadley Royal estate. Sir Philip Nugent is an excellent landlord.”

Robert started, and asked, almost involuntarily, “Does Sir Philip Nugent live here?”

“He has a house here, but he rarely, if ever, comes down. If we walk to the top of this hill we shall look straight over to it. It is considered a very grand place—the grandest in the country, I believe.”

When they gained the hill-top, however, there was a mist in the valley rising from the river, so that Robert could only discern a vast pile of buildings, with a confused number of gables and chimneys rising out of it, and fine slopes of wood on the outskirts of a great park.

“If it were clearer you would see the ruins of

Eurevaux Abbey," said Dorothea; "they lie right up at the head of Gleddale. There's not a sweeter spot in the world to spend a summer holiday in than Eurevaux; is there, George?"

"Is Eurevaux Sir Philip Nugent's property also?" Robert asked.

"Yes; it is all his property for miles on this side of Walton."

It was growing dusk, but not so dusk that Robert's frequent changes of countenance could escape Dorothea's notice. She, however, appeared as little observant as possible, and because she felt intuitively that Robert had a secret interest in the family, she began to tell him that Lady Leigh and her sister-in-law, Lady Nugent, Sir Philip's mother, lived in two houses on the Minster Hill, and that all Walton honoured them for their goodness and charity. Lady Leigh was especially liberal. She was childless, but very fond of children, and since her widowhood she had adopted and brought up a succession of motherless girls, two of whom she had recently portioned and married—one to a beneficed clergyman, the other to a young naval officer, a distant relative of her

own. Her last *protégée* was little Lilian Carlton, the only child of Peter Carlton, organist and choir-master at the Minster.

Robert listened to these details with a sick throbbing at his heart. This was the first time since his coming to Walton that anything had occurred to remind him of what was awkward and unnatural in his position. The idea of having anything to conceal was insupportably repugnant to his open and honest temper, and after wrestling with it for some time in silence, he startled Dorothea by saying, just as they came within the shadow of the town,—“Dorothea, I must tell some one—let me tell you; Cyrus and I are Sir Philip Nugent’s sons.”

The young woman made some kind incoherent answer, but quite enough to draw him on to add, “Our mother is dead, and she is always to be spoken of with reverence. Indeed, Dorothea, she was as good as an angel, but Sir Philip was very deceitful and cruel to her. Mr. Ford, the clergyman at home, always said our mother was without any blame.”

“Yes, my dear, I am quite sure of it—never

mind telling me any more now," said Dorothea, warmly. She had caught hold of the boy's hand, and held it until they parted at the top of Maiden Lane. It was months since he had spoken of his mother to any one, and at the thought of her his voice broke into a passionate sob. As he went down the dark silent street alone he was crying bitterly. From that day forth Robert Hawthorne and Dorothea Sancton were friends.

V.

Lady Leigh, widow of the last Lord Leigh of Yarborough, was, as Dorothea Sancton stated, a good and useful woman; everybody in Walton Minster knew exactly to what extent she was good and useful, and they praised her in the gates accordingly. She was not one to hide her light under a bushel; she preferred rather to set it upon a hill, as it were, that it might be seen of the whole country, and reflect a modified lustre upon her order. Her sister-in-law, Lady Nugent, was also charitable and pious, but in a minor

degree: she did her alms-deeds in byways and secret places, and lived a very modest retired life, dividing her time between her Bible, her poor folks, her household, and her letters to her dear son, very equitably. Lady Leigh had built and endowed a hospital for poor widows, and had added considerably to a foundation for the education of orphans. She had erected a handsome memorial window to her deceased husband in the Minster church, and for a quarter of a century past, had actively forwarded, both by personal effort and liberal gifts, every benevolent scheme that had come within her knowledge. Her wealth was very great, and her Nugent temper being naturally generous, even to ostentation, she found an unqualified delight in giving away the overplus of her riches which she could not use.

"I cannot take my money with me," she argued; "and it would be nothing to Philip Nugent, or to those Howard Leighs, who have more than enough already, so I might as well enjoy the pleasure of doing good, and of setting a proper example." So she was charitable to a proverb, and set a very proper example.

To go into her house on the Minster Hill was to enter a museum of all that was rare, and costly, and fashionable in those days. In her fine peach-coloured drawing-room was collected every variety of handsome and hideous, homely and grotesque, porcelain figure, jar, bowl, and cup; Indian cabinets, Chinese carvings, Japan screens, and French eccentricities over-abounded. Rarely a day passed, that Lilian Carlton did not get into disgrace for upsetting or breaking some invaluable toy in the crowded room; and doubtless the little maid thought her father's solitary house, looking over the churchyard, with its avenues of elms and centuries of dead, by far the happier place.

Lady Leigh had never conceived within her own mind that a child could be otherwise than delighted and proud to live under her beneficent care and instruction. She had represented to Peter Carlton the good that must accrue to his motherless girl, from being trained under supervision such as hers, and though the organist was very reluctant to yield her up, he was, at length, prevailed on to do so, though less by Lady Leigh's

arguments, than by little Lilian's own babyish enjoyment of all she had been permitted to see and do during a day spent with her patroness, by way of trial. She had not, however, been long in discovering that happiness does not consist in wearing fine clothes or in living in fine rooms; and then she pined after her father, as a bird in a gilt cage pines after the free air and its companions, until her longing to go back to him broke out in Dorothea Sancton's familiar presence, as we have seen. Lady Nugent, who had always felt a secret pity for the little ones under her austere and childless sister-in-law's protection, early discovered Lilian's restlessness, and had almost made up her mind to attempt her deliverance, when Lady Leigh herself, by a startling declaration, soon after gave her an opening to introduce the delicate subject without exciting displeasure.

VI.

This declaration was announced one afternoon in the peach-coloured, pot-pourri-scented drawing-room, where the sisters were sitting after luncheon with the demure gentlewomen whom they retained as companions and secretaries. Though their houses were not ten minutes' walk distant from each other, they frequently exchanged visits of three and four days at a time, bringing these ladies and their respective tapestry frames with them.

When Lady Leigh had anything particular to say, she always said it without preface, and let it make its own impression; so she spoke now, in a distinct peremptory tone, which made the two dependent gentlewomen metaphorically prick their ears to listen. "Helena, I am seriously inclined to take a boy to bring up; the monotony of a girl's education does not absorb me sufficiently."

"Indeed! Are you wearying of your little maid Lilian?" replied Lady Nugent. "She

does not seem to take kindly to her captivity. I have been thinking you would have to release her."

"No such thing! I never allow myself to be overmatched by a child's fantasies. Lilian is very happy and very grateful." The two dependent gentlewomen exchanged looks of commiserating intelligence; one of them, a poor French lady, a refugee, knew to a hair's breadth the amount of happiness and gratitude experienced by those who lived under Lady Leigh's dominion.

"Look at the child now, she is a picture of health and enjoyment," said the self-gratulating patroness of orphans, pointing through the window to the shady garden where Lilian, in direct disobedience to orders, was standing in amongst a bed of white and orange lilies which almost overtopped her golden head. In a minute or two she emerged, bearing a tall flower-covered stem, broken off by the root, and ran away with it down one of the green alleys out of sight. "Young creatures are always uneasy in confinement, but Lilian breathes only free air. You shall hear her express her feelings for her-

self; Madame Lefevre, please to ring the bell."

The French lady rose and tinkled a little bell that stood within reach of her mistress's hand, and before she had time to resume her seat, appeared a little, grinning, black page in a sumptuous livery of scarlet and gold. Lady Leigh kept up all the state of her household, exactly as it had been in her husband's lifetime, and, like royalty, she delivered her orders to servants through a medium.

"Tell Sempronius to seek Lilian in the garden, and bring her here, Madame Lefevre." Madame repeated the command, and the black page vanished.

"Yes, Helena; I have serious thoughts of taking a boy to bring up," said Lady Leigh, reverting to her original idea; "I have a liking for boys."

"Since when, Augusta? Philip used to be a daily aggravation to you when he was a boy," replied Lady Nugent.

"You indulged him so foolishly."

Lady Nugent's white cheek flushed as she said, in a deprecating tone,—“Severity would

have been worse than my over-fondness; our children cannot be made mere automaton of our will. Their hearts and dispositions are worked by springs quite independent of ours."

"If it had pleased God to give *me* children, they should have had no single sentiment, no single feeling independent of me," cried Lady Leigh, emphatically. "They should not have looked, or spoken, or thought save by my permission. Mistress Alice Johnes, you pretend to be a philosopher and student of ethics, tell us, ought not the government of families to be despotic?"

"Your ladyship will be pleased to remember that the human being is not a mechanical contrivance, but a reasoning soul. I would have no despotism, either in families or in kingdoms, unless we had archangels over us," spiritedly replied the dark little Welshwoman.

Lady Leigh smiled sarcastically while Lady Nugent commended her humble companion's reply. Madame Lefevre sighed audibly, and envied Mrs. Alice Johnes her considerate patroness. Hers was often hard to her—hard and bitter. You might have thought that Lady Leigh had met with experiences

and disappointments, such as do not, in general, tend to improve our opinion of our species; perhaps my Lord Leigh, now for more than thirty years taking his rest beneath the pavement of the northern transept of the Minster church, with the memorial window glowing blushing over his sculptured virtues, could have told us whether or no it were so.

Sempronius re-entered. "Missa Lilian not in garden, not about anywhere to be seen," announced he, with grinning sable visage, addressed towards Madame Lefevre. She repeated his words exactly as he gave them.

"Tell him to seek her again," was the abrupt reply, and Sempronius disappeared forthwith.

The interrupted conversation was resumed by the ardent little Welshwoman breaking into a respectful panegyric on liberty.

"Liberty!" cried she, with enthusiasm; "Liberty is our very breath of life: take that from us and we die! What a glorious decision was that of Lord Mansfield, in which he declared that no slave could live on English ground—no slave could breathe English air!"

"Ah! my excellent Mistress Alice, spare us your pet story for once!" interposed Lady Leigh, deprecatingly; "we all know it from beginning to end. Granville Sharp and his interesting negro have our best sympathy and admiration, I assure you, and Lord Mansfield's principle meets our full approval. Let us hear the other side of the question. Madame Lefevre, according to your views, what is liberty?"

"Hélas, my lady, what for you ask me? *La liberté*; it is wild beast anarchy *déguisé, masqué*. *La liberté à nous autres ce n'est pas votre freedom à vous!* Our *liberté*! Have I not seen it ravage my country like a boar out of the forest? Talk to me not of *liberté*, it is the password of bad men to bad deeds! I will not hear it. Our king, our queen, our nobles, *assassinés*; our lands——"

"Never mind the confiscations, madame; they are a thrice-told tale," said Lady Leigh, between a laugh and a yawn. "I am afraid you will never come by your own again, so it is consoling to hear that you condemn liberty and take so kindly to your exile and servitude."

"My *servitude*—ah, *non, non!*" and the poor

withered lady dropped her head over her embroidery, repeating the hateful word again and again in every variety of intonation expressive of disgust and weariness. Mistress Alice Johnes, who was well placed and tough of spirit, and who had risen instead of declining in the world, regarded her contemptuously, as the big tears trickled down her high thin nose and then dropped on her lean shaky hands, so busy with the rich carmines of a half-blown rose. After controlling her heat for some moments she was constrained to speak by the effervescent fervour of her emotions, and addressed the poor stranger with an air of withering rebuke :

“France is not capable of bearing freedom,” said she ; “liberty is like a high-mettled steed ; give it air, give it exercise, give it the reason-curbed use of its magnificent powers, and behold in it a perfect work of God, obedient ever to the hand of the master rider ; but confine it, gag it, stall-feed it, maltreat it, and it will surely destroy any that attempt to mount it, when it escapes its prison.”

“You are grandiloquent in metaphor, Mistress

Alice," sneered Lady Leigh; "now, madame, it is your turn again."

She delighted to pit the two poor ladies against each other, and to hear how they raved; but this time madame declined the challenge, except to say, with low-voiced fervour—

"There is a difference, a *juste milieu*, between the anarchy of revolution and the anarchy of the military despotism which the Emperor has established. Ah! my Lady Leigh, all honour, courage, patriotism, are not dead in the breasts of my countrymen; France will yet be free!"

Sempronius appeared in the presence for the third time.

"Missa Lilian not in garden," repeated he; "Missa Lilian run away!"

Lady Leigh turned round with an angry frown.

"How dare you say that, sir? Why should any one run away from me? Madame, give me my hood, and I will seek the child myself. Helena, lend me your arm," and, clutching her gold-headed stick, she marched away across the hall, leaning upon her sister-in-law, and went

out on the sunshiny terrace, below the windows where Lilian had been playing. The two companions presently followed, with their ladies' mantillas, and themselves ready to join in the quest.

"Mistress Alice Johnes, you have almost a man's voice, call the child. She is hiding somewhere among the bushes," said Lady Leigh.

The Welshwoman lifted up a very sonorous tone, but there was no response, though she cried out three times.

"The little rebel! I will have Hilton whip her soundly when she comes back," said Lilian's patroness, angrily.

"You will never whip her into love of you, Augusta," whispered Lady Nugent.

Those gardens on the Minster Hill were beautiful old places. The houses stood very high, and the ground descended from them in successive lawns and terraces, laid out with gay flower knots and clumps of evergreens. The afternoon sunshine was now richly pouring through the thick trees, and just as they came out the Minster bell began to ring for evening prayers.

"The little child may have run into the

church ; she talks for ever of her father and his grand music," suggested Madame Lefevre.

"Perhaps so, but she should not have gone alone ; she is disobedient," curtly replied Lady Leigh : but she accepted the offered clue and descended the terrace steps to the street, which was excluded from view by a high wall and double row of sycamores. The street curved round the south side of the hill at the base of the old gardens ; the palisaded enclosure of the great grave-yard was its other boundary, and looking straight across the wilderness of mounds and stones to its farther side, several ancient houses showed through the dim sultriness of shadow cast upon them by the Minster church itself. In one of these curious dwellings Peter Carlton had lived ever since he was elected to the office of organist ; and from its low-studded door the four ladies now saw him issue, leading naughty, truant Lilian by the hand. The little maiden's golden hair was all uncovered, her white, plump arms were glancing bare, and over her shoulder she carried the lily stem as if it were a sword. She looked so pretty and so happy,

so negligent and so fearless, dancing along by her father's side, that Lady Nugent's motherly heart yearned towards her.

"It is only natural, Augusta, do not let us spoil her enjoyment," pleaded she; and Lady Leigh grimly acquiesced.

There was a flagged pathway between two high banks of graves from the old houses to a side entrance of the church, and while Peter Carlton was unlocking the door with his pass-key, Lillian espied the towering figure of her patroness advancing with the other ladies. She broke into a tricky laugh, shook her head at them mischievously, and then vanished like a sunbeam into the interior gloom. Lady Leigh did not seem very well pleased with this baby defiance; however, she let it pass, and proposed that since they were so near they should go to prayers. Shut up in their dignified stalls, the ladies could see the lily-head nodding over the curtain of the organ loft, and occasionally a tiny hand drew the red folds aside, and a fair laughing face peeped down to where they sat. When the prayers were ended, and the concluding voluntary was being

played, they went down one of the side aisles to the foot of the organ-loft stairs, and there waited until Peter Carlton and his little daughter appeared. Peter made them a low reverence as he descended, almost tripping himself up over the uneven stones in the excess of his humility. He was a long-nosed melancholy enthusiast, black-haired and lean, a ludicrous contrast to his bright bud of a child. Lady Nugent regarded his sallow visage with pity, and secretly hoped that he would assert his right to reclaim Lilian; but he did not. When Lady Leigh extended her hand to take possession of the child, he bowed low again, and gave it up without demur. Lilian looked into his face for a moment or two with wistful, tear-bright eyes of entreaty, but as he only said—

“You must go, Lily,” and turned away his face, she leant her pretty head against her patroness’s rich silken sleeve, and accompanied her without a word.

The struggle was not harder for Lilian than it was for Peter. Peter owed an unredeemable debt to Lady Leigh, or so his intense gratitude taught

him to think. She had found him almost starving, with a sick young wife, a baby, and no work. He had Italian blood in his veins, derived from his mother, who had been a singer and actress; from her, too, he had drawn his passionate love of music, the only vocation he had ever attempted to follow; but this vocation had never found him or his in bread, until Lady Leigh, having assured herself of his personal worth and professional capability, exerted all her influence to get him appointed organist and master of the church choristers. Very soon after his young wife died, and Lady Leigh, thinking to confer upon him yet another kindness, deprived him of his child.

When the whole party were again in the street, and progressing slowly homewards under the shady garden wall, Lady Nugent, in her kindness of heart, made another effort for the little exile.

Lady Leigh was rather impatient of what she called her sister's "solicitous crotchets," but at last she said, in reply to her arguments—

"Well, Helena, if I am successful in getting

possession of the boy I have set my mind on to bring up, I *will* let Lilian go."

"Then you have a boy in view! Who is it?" asked Lady Nugent, in unfeigned surprise.

"I will tell you by-and-by, for here he comes with young George Sancton—observe him well."

The two boys would have passed the stately dowagers by had not Lady Leigh, resting on her gold-headed stick, bidden them to stop. She held them in talk several minutes, and then dismissed them with a nod of her head.

"How do you like his appearance? He is a handsome, intelligent-looking lad, is he not?" she asked, quietly.

"Who is he, Augusta? You have some mystery under this?"

"Does he remind you of any one? Madame, you may leave us for the present. My sister and I wish to be alone."

The attendant gentlewoman quickly disappeared into the house, Lilian vanished amongst the flowers, and the two ladies, slowly following into the garden, seated themselves on a rustic chair under a wide-spreading tree. Lady Nugent only

replied to her sister's last question by a puzzled look.

Lady Leigh repeated, "Does he remind you of any one?"

"Why do you set me riddles? It is Philip he is like," said Lady Nugent, faintly.

"Yes, Helena, and he is Philip's son. He is a twin brother of the boy whom Tom Nugent wrote to me about."

Lady Nugent flushed all over her pale, gentle face: "Who told you so, Augusta?", she asked.

"Dorothea Sancton. He is the boy whom I saw at Miss Kibblewhite's, and it seems that when I was gone he told her his history. She said that when he spoke of his mother he was almost heart-broken."

"Then is that story Dean Mauleverer had heard from his cousin Ford *true*—the marriage at Chinelyn?"

"I am afraid it is but too true—so the lad informed Dorothea. His mother is lately dead, and I hear that she was a niece of old Joshua Hawthorne, the varnish-maker in Maiden Lane."

There was a long silence. Lady Nugent's conscience was deeply wounded for her son. She was self-convicted of having indulged him in his wilful ways, until her mother's heart and woman's hand were found far too weak to curb his masterful passions; and here were the fruits of them, suddenly springing up in the declining path of her life to renew the old grief and fret.

"I intend to claim the guardianship of this Robert Hawthorne myself," said Lady Leigh, presently. "We might have been proud to look to such a boy as heir of our house, but as that cannot be, I will make him a soldier and leave him all I have. Others like him have risen into repute, and made their bar sinister to be forgotten, have married well and founded families; why should not he?"

"But, Augusta, might not Philip resent your interference?" said Lady Nugent, timidly.

"What care I for Philip's resentment or Philip's approval! There is nothing but the publicity to annoy us, and I shall brave that rather than let that noble-looking lad be thrown away on such a mean occupation as the one to

which he is now condemned. Say no more, Helena, for I shall certainly claim the boy." Lady Leigh rose up with an emphatic thud of her stick upon the ground, and dispensing with the further support of her sister's arm, marched away indignantly to the house. Lady Nugent followed her slowly and sorrowfully.

VII.

The next day in the cool of the evening, Lady Leigh commanded the attendance of Sempronius, and went down to Maiden Lane to pay a visit to Mr. Joshua Hawthorne. The old gentleman had to be sought for in the office, and, meantime, Mrs. Deborah Eliotson entertained her with obsequious conversation in the parlour. When the head of the firm entered the room, he bowed profoundly, but the gravity of his countenance did not relax. Knowing Lady Leigh's character well, he had a prescience of what she came about, and he was resolved not to comply with her demands; but she, unaccustomed to opposition,

and far from anticipating it now, opened her errand without circumlocution.

"Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, you have a young lad with you now, who is a sort of kinsman to us Nugents, and I have determined to adopt him myself," said she, graciously. "I think it a pity that he should be condemned to the obscurity and drudgery of trade. He has good blood in his veins, and merits a better fortune."

"I should regret to displease your ladyship, but I cannot give up Robert Hawthorne on any pretence," was the firm, but respectful answer. "The obscurity and drudgery of trade have sufficed me, and they will suffice him."

"Sir, you surprise me!" exclaimed Lady Leigh, with raised complexion and resentful glance. "Retain the boy against *my will*?"

"I have said that I should be sorry to displease your ladyship, but I have only to repeat my previous words, I cannot give up Robert Hawthorne on any pretence. He himself would be the last person in the world to desire the change."

"But I would give him such an education and such a profession as would make him a com-

panion for gentlemen. What do you propose to do for him that can compensate for denying him such advantages?"

"I do not acknowledge your ladyship's right to catechise me as to my intentions," replied the old man, stiffly, for Lady Leigh's tone affronted him. "I love the lad, and that is voucher sufficient that I shall do my duty by him."

"I am not satisfied with your answer; I desire to see the boy, and question him myself. He cannot—with his countenance—bear a mind so low as to delight in the mean chaffering of trade. I will not believe it unless I hear it from his own lips."

Old Joshua Hawthorne was far too courteous to note the insulting remarks of a lady who had lost her temper; he quietly desired Mrs. Eliotson to seek the boy, and sat silent opposite to his indignant visitor, until she reappeared with him. Robert had been working at some carpentry under the willing instruction of Tom Aldin, and he came in all dusty and heated as he was; his brown curls pushed away roughly from his broad white forehead, and his cheeks flushed with a

sunburnt glow, which became deeper still as he confronted the stately lady seated in his uncle's chair.

"Robert, Lady Leigh is desirous of asking you certain questions; you will answer her entirely according to your own feelings, without any reference to me. I will leave you together for the purpose. Mrs. Eliotson, we will withdraw." And the head of the firm closed the door, and retired with the housekeeper, whose natural curiosity was extremely disappointed.

"We have met before; you know who I am?" said Lady Leigh, resuming her gentler manner.

"Yes," replied Robert; he looked at her steadily, and tried to harden himself, she all the while thinking what a noble brave face he had.

"Who am I?"

"You are Lady Leigh, the aunt of Sir Philip Nugent of Hadley Royal."

Lady Leigh had anticipated a different answer; she had expected that he would designate her his *father's* aunt.

"True," said she; "I am Lady Leigh, aunt to

Sir Philip Nugent of Hadley Royal, and, through him, a kinswoman of your own. It is in the latter character that I wish to speak to you. I have no son—will you come and be as a son to me?”

“Your ladyship forgets that my Uncle Hawthorne has adopted me,” replied Robert.

“But you can separate from him. I could open to you an honourable career. You did not know of me nor I of you when he took you. Your brother will have the training, the profession, and the society of gentlemen—why should you be his inferior? You are no true Nugent if you refuse.”

“I am no true Nugent, madam. I do not claim their name or their character at all,” Robert said, quietly.

“You have their pride, sir, whatever else you lack,” retorted Lady Leigh, frowning.

“Am I to understand that you abide by your base bartering life?—that you remain where you are and grow into a mere trader, whose highest ambition is to be some day Mayor of Walton?”

To this Robert vouchsafed neither look nor answer—perhaps he could not.

“You do not speak,” added Lady Leigh, more gently. “Indeed, yours is a fate which none with Nugent blood in his veins should brook.”

“I did not choose the dishonour of having Nugent blood in my veins,” said Robert, kindling. “I have neither name nor kindred except my brother, and I have no ambition except to live peaceably in the station where misfortune has placed me.”

“You speak well, Robert, but I wish you would come with me. The Nugents have been proud of their left-hand sons before, and they shall be proud of them again.”

“While our mother was alive, Cyrus and I elected how and with whom we should live. I shall never alter my determination.”

“You may deny us with your lips, but that pride in your heart will always betray you.”

“It is enough that it does not tempt me now to leave my uncle Joshua.”

Lady Leigh forced a laugh. She liked the boy, and was grievously disappointed at not gaining her will. She resumed her plea still more urgently; recited advantages, indulgences, honours, luxuries, that he would enjoy with her; but from first to last, Robert was unmoved. At length she said, "If you repent of your present resolution, will you seek me?" He could safely promise that he would. Then she added, "And though you will not live with me, will you acknowledge me so far as to come to my house as a friend. Your brother will visit me, and you will meet him."

Robert was sorely tempted, but he said at length, "I would rather Cyrus came to me here."

"You refuse me everything!" Lady Leigh rose irefully and grasped her stick to depart.

"Madam, I have not thanked you for your intended kindness. I do thank you gratefully," said Robert, "most gratefully."

"I would rather you had accepted it ever so unthankfully."

And so Lady Leigh went her way, chafing over her disappointment, and Lilian Carlton, to Lady

Nugent's deep regret, remained still in captivity. Every Sunday, morning and evening, sitting in their stalls at the Minster service, the dowager ladies could look down upon the illegitimate son whom they would have been so glad to call heir to all their family honours. Robert never glanced towards them, but he was often conscious of two pairs of dark, age-dimmed eyes watching him ; and perhaps the lad had rebellious and ambitious dreams sometimes which tempted him to accept their lofty patronage. Was it the Nugent pride or some worthier impulse that helped him to vanquish them, I wonder. I think it was his keen resentful memory of his mother's wrongs, received from the hands of one of those same right honourable Nugents. Robert Hawthorne was not of a shallow, pliant, forgiving temper, and already he had begun to feel some of the pains and penalties attached to his position.

VIII.

And he had not yet done being tempted to abandon his fealty to the firm of Hawthorne and Co., if temptation it could be called. One afternoon, while crossing the market-place bound on an errand from Maiden Lane, he suddenly heard himself pursued, and called upon to stop in a voice that made his heart leap. Turning round, he found himself face to face with his brother Cyrus. The two boys grasped hands, but for a moment both were too glad to speak. Then it was,—

“Why, Cyr, you have dropped from the clouds,” and—

“Oh! Robin, how capital it is to see your dear old face!”

And then they looked each other over, Cyrus's eye catching the homely details of Robert's everyday apprentice dress, but Robert seeing only how Cyrus was grown, and how handsome and happy he appeared.

“I was on my way to Maiden Lane when I saw you,” Cyrus began to explain; “let us get into some shady spot by ourselves, for I have a hundred things to tell you. Oh! Robin, I wish we could be always together; you seem so *natural* to me, you know—not at all like anybody else.”

In these hot midsummer days there was no place so cool or shady as the aisles of the Minster church, so the lads plunged through its dark arched gates into the twilight silence of the northern transept, and pacing to and fro, linked arm in arm, proceeded to unbosom themselves of their respective experiences since their separation. Cyrus was always the more fluent talker of the two, but neither of them found any details trivial or uninteresting. Robert learnt the obnoxiousness of the young Leasowes Nugents, and the Rev. Samuel Miles’s personal peculiarities; the delights of Highland glens, midland hunting counties, and London sights; and Cyrus was made acquainted with Uncle Joshua, and Pussy, and Tom Aldin, and Dorothea Sancton. When they came to speak more immediately of themselves, it was observable that they dropped

their voices to a lower key; and that, at first, each avoided meeting the other's eye.

"It is impossible for my father to be kinder to me than he is," Cyrus said, quietly. "I have never told you yet that he will have me called by his own name, Cyrus Hawthorne Nugent. Indeed, some people regard me as his heir."

This was the poor lad's own delusion.

"But you will never so regard yourself, dear Cyr? because it could not be in reality, you know," Robert replied.

"Why not?"

"Because Sir Philip Nugent's principal estates are entailed, and go to his cousin Nugent of the Leasowes. My uncle Joshua explained it all to me one evening, and he understands it."

Cyrus looked intensely mortified, and was silent until Robert asked where he was staying in Walton.

"I am at Lady Leigh's. My father went to Lady Nugent's and left me at the Mitre with Mr. Miles, but Lady Leigh came and took me to her house. She is a fierce old woman, but I like her; she told me how you had refused to

let her do anything for you. Why did you, Robin? You and I shall be so different as we grow up."

"We need not cease to love each other—that is the only difference for which I should care."

"Or I either. But I say, Robin, is it not strange that Uncle Joshua should be living as a paltry tradesman in the midst of all the Nugents?"

"There is nothing paltry about Uncle Joshua, Cyr, and so you would allow if you knew him. I have sometimes wished he did not live here, but as it cannot be helped, I try not to care."

"It would be an unceasing mortification to me; indeed, I think I could not bear it."

"I am afraid, Cyr, there's many a mortification belonging to our position that we shall have to learn to bear. A score of times or more since I came to Walton have I wished myself the son of the meanest shopkeeper in the place rather than what I am," said Robert, fervently.

"So should I never," was Cyrus's indignant reply. "I have no ambition to be ever so honestly

born a clown. You have not forgotten old Scrope's books of plays, have you, Robin?—Shakspeare's I mean."

"No; but I read them less than you."

"I found a volume of the same last night in Lady Leigh's library, and took it out to read. Do you recollect King John?"

"I recollect Prince Arthur and Hubert in it."

"Don't you recollect Philip Falconbridge too?"

"Yes; I think I do. He was the son of Richard Cœur-de-Lion."

"He was the bastard son of Richard Cœur-de-Lion. He was Plantagenet, as we are Nugent. He had the strength and courage and beauty of [his father, as we have of ours. Robin, I am enraged when I think of what we lose, but I am glad when I recall how much more we gain."

"Oh! Cyr, but our mother! Can you ever forget our mother's sufferings?" said Robert, reproachfully.

"I never forget them, Robin. When I think

of her, I almost *hate* my father. My whole soul rises in revolt against him. I have a little picture of her copied from one he has: I wish you could see it. Oh! it is such a beautiful face!"

"When was our mother's face not beautiful, Cyr? To me it always was."

At that moment the Minster bell began to ring for evening prayers, and already a few of its regular frequenters were entering at the sunshiny western doorway, which stood wide open. Robert proposed that they should leave the building and take refuge under the shady elms that bordered its graveyard, but instead of going out of the great doors, they passed through the little postern in the northern transept, and just as they were descending the moist, mossy steps they came in sight of an advancing group; Lady Nugent leaning on her son Sir Philip's arm, and Mistress Alice Johnes following with the prayer and anthem books. At the same instant came up from another direction Dean Mauleverer, a big, rubicund man, a priest of a type now happily worn out at Walton Minster as elsewhere. He bowed

with gracious expansion to the living representatives of the family that had patronized him and such as him for generations, greatly to the detriment of the Church, and then stared at the two boys.

"Are these the lads I have heard of, Sir Philip?" cried he, in a voice husky from high feeding. "Fine lads they are, too, and carry their paternity in their faces. You should make this fiery youngster a soldier, and the other one of us. Beg your pardon, my Lady Nugent, but I think I must give your son my absolution." And so the jolly priest swept by with a bow and a grin, and got up in his public office to pray God to have mercy upon all miserable sinners, himself amongst the rest.

The brothers had stepped aside from the pathway to let the party pass, and Robert, though he looked directly in his father's face, gave no sign of recognition—unless a deep blush might be so called.

Sir Philip and his mother paused, however, and the former said: "I will leave you now,

mother, to the care of Mistress Alice Johnes, and join these boys."

"Will you not go to the service? the dean will expect to see you," replied Lady Nugent, scarcely relinquishing his arm.

"I am not in praying mood just now."

"When are you, my son? Oh! Philip, do not let your sin meet you at the gates of God's house and turn you away from it," urged Lady Nugent, with whispered, almost tearful vehemence.

"I am no Puritan you know, mother."

"Let us go back into the church, Cyr," whispered Robert, who overheard both the plea and the reply, and without another word spoken they all entered the building. When Sir Philip and his mother reached their stalls, Cyrus came in too, but Robert betook himself to his own place elsewhere, and when prayers were over he was missing altogether. Sir Philip looked round for him and whispered an inquiry of Cyrus, but Cyrus said that as soon as the voluntary began he had risen and gone out.

IX.

Sir Philip Nugent was not insensible to the mortification and pain of being thus avoided by Robert Hawthorne, but on the following day, accompanied by Cyrus, he went down to Maiden Lane bent on having an interview with him and Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, with a view, if possible, of urging on them the acceptance of Lady Leigh's proposal.

Robert was at first very reluctant to appear, but, at last, urged by Cyrus, he went into the grim old parlour where his father waited, and permitted himself to be shaken by the hand. Perhaps Sir Philip Nugent had never in his life experienced a more uncomfortable sensation than he received from his son's unwilling response to his greeting. A few months had amazingly developed Robert's intelligence, and with the loving generosity of his age and temper he had elected himself into his mother's partisan. In his calm, deep nature, underlying all it had of good, there

was a burning resentment against his father. He understood now how he 'must have lied to his deceased mother in every word and in every caress; knew that the whole course of their union must have been one of blind devotion on her part and of systematic treachery on his. To Robert a lie was a lie, whether spoken to men in the public ways or to a woman for the winning of her love, and a lie was the meanest degradation that could blot the name of gentleman. Robert had all this in his mind when he came into his father's presence—the lad could not forgive him what his mother had suffered—would not forgive him.

Sir Philip was a proud man, and when he met the steady look with which Robert coldly regarded him, his feelings were something akin to shame and confusion. By the world at large he was accounted an honourable man, and he had always so accounted of himself; his conscience latterly had refrained from inconveniencing him, but somehow his cloak of conventionalities did not protect him from the sting of his son's unloving regard. Cyrus stood by, feeling the meeting very painfully,

and already predicating in his own mind that it would be useless.

It was useless so far as changing Robert's vocation went; he would only reiterate his resolve to remain a member of the firm of Hawthorne and Co., in which, of course, his uncle Joshua supported him. When Lady Leigh was told of his obstinacy, she remarked that he had a churl's soul in a noble's body, and doubtless knew what sphere would best range with his common instincts.

As Sir Philip, more deeply wounded than he would have wished to show, at length rose to depart, Cyrus whispered to his brother, with whom he was standing apart in the window,

"Say good-bye *kindly*, Robin, our mother *did* love him, and he is our *father*, you know."

Robert coloured high and the tears sprang into his bright young eyes, but he gave his hand to Sir Philip impulsively. Sir Philip stood holding it, but saying nothing, for a minute or two, until Robert looked up into his face with an expression wonderfully like poor Mary's; then he dropped it and kissed the lad's forehead—nature for a moment triumphing over all besides—and went out of the

room and out of the house without a word. Cyrus stayed behind for a little time, and I think the parting of the two brothers was even sadder than that which took place after their mother's death.

They did not meet again until they were grown to manhood, until the shores of youth had receded into indistinctness, and they were out on the deep waters of life's great sea. Sir Philip Nugent conveyed Cyrus abroad for the further advantage of his education, and Robert remained at Walton Minster gathering the experience and skill needful to the future head of the firm of Hawthorne and Co.

PART SECOND.



On the Deep Waters.

"O HEAVEN ! that one might read the book of fate,
And see the revolutions of the times.

— How chances mock,
And changes fill the cup of alteration
With divers liquors! Oh, if this were seen,
The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book and sit him down and die."

SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry IV.*

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

FAIR WINDS.

"All common things, each day's events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.

"We have not wings, we cannot soar;
But we have feet to scale and climb
By slow degrees, by more and more,
The cloudy summits of our time.

"The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night."

LONGFELLOW, *The Ladder of St. Augustine.*

I.

To be young—to be twenty years old—to have
no aches, no pains, no regrets worthy of the name!
It is a glorious time, few of us know how glorious
until we are young no more!

We are so like travellers with a long journey

before them, setting off at our topmost speed in the bright morning, dashing forward impetuous as if the miles would stretch before us to infinity, wearying over the early ways that must be trodden, disregarding the sunny landscape we are passing through, and the wayside flowers we are trampling down, because our eager eyes are fixed on some distant hill where the midday seems to shine with dazzling effulgence. The hill-top gained, we behold sterile spots, parched and shadowless as African deserts; it is no more all beautiful than the country we have traversed already—nay, we think it even less beautiful. Looking wistfully behind us, at last we see distinctly the quiet stretches of scenery, the green fields, and woods, and rivulets, the calm light, the flying showers that we made of such small account, and confess in our hearts that the morning is the best time of the day, and that we have passed over the loveliest district our wayfaring feet had to tread, before we had learnt the wisdom of enjoying and being thankful.

Children, we are impatient to grow up; travellers, we long for our journey's end; old, we would

fain put back the swift hands on the dial of Time ;
resting at strange inns, we grow home-sick and
heart-sick, and would fain return. But no ! For-
ward is the word, and God's will be done !

II.

Cyrus and Robert Hawthorne were no wiser than their fellows. They had dreamed dreams, and seen visions, which some near future had it in charge to realize : we shall know how that future kept its promise by and by. Meanwhile, hope made their hearts light, and their step buoyant, and they addressed themselves to their life-journey with good courage.

Great events had been happening in the world while they were boys ; but, at last, after long and cruel convulsions—after revolutions in which kings were overthrown, and princes became as the basest amongst the people—after wars, where thousands of brave soldiers were ploughed into the furrows of death, and thousands of innocent homes were made desolate—peace spread her white

wings over the earth, and men rested under their shadow in safety. There were poet-giants living in the land in those days—men of spiritual might, heroes in the lists of Parnassus, against whom the belligerent critics ran a tilt in vain! High-seated in the saddle of popular favour, they shook the lance of defiance in their foemen's blinking visage, and rode their career triumphant, unannoyed save by the dust and reek of their own praises. Little smooth-faced innocents stood by, open-mouthed and wide-eared, swallowing the dust, and the reek, and the clamour of the famous ones, until, being dazed, they fancied themselves inspired, and began to pipe forth an echo—an echo exceeding small—of the great men's songs; then mounting the wooden hobby-horse of self-gratulation, they clattered stiff-legged into the arena, casting tinselly gauntlets right and left; but lo! in a turn or two they were overthrown, and their puny lives trampled out to an accompaniment of horrid shouts and laughter.

Parnassus is strewn with the untimely bones of these slaughtered innocents.

Amidst the throng at its loudest, there one

bright day appeared a ruddy-cheeked, amorous David, fair-fronted and courageous. The grizzled warriors recognised in him a revival of their own exuberant youth, and greeted him with cheers. He was bold-eyed as one who fears no man, ruby-lipped, and white-browed as one who will win the love of women. His voice was pleasant to the ear, melodious and touching, the overflow of a full passionate heart, into whose sweetness the tooth of no decay has bitten. The giants bade him ride the race for immortality with them, so the youth sprang upon his fiery courser, and pranced into the *mêlée* amongst the best, shaking his hyacinthine locks, and crying "Eureka!" ere the struggle was well begun.

Slowly, steadily, young David! bridle thy impetuous pride! the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong! In the dust of the trampled course lies many a stout hero dis-crowned, overriden, unrecognisable save by the few soiled leaves of bay, clutched in his skeleton hand. The prize hangs high. To gain it thou must reach and look upward—not to the ground where rewards of gold lie for thy taking—not to

either hand for mob-applause—but upward and onward, upward and onward!

Dazzled already! Ah, heedless David! not long shalt thou ride with the heroes, unless thou wilt look to thy ways, as all who have travelled far have looked before thee!

III.

Which being interpreted signifies in plain English, that Cyrus Hawthorne Nugent, when in his twenty-first year, did cause to be printed and published a collection of songs and ballads by him conceived and composed, and that the collection aforesaid was warmly welcomed by the poetry-reading public, praised by the great literary dons, and tenderly handled by the minor critics. This gracious reception not unnaturally elated the youthful aspirant after fame, and filled him with resplendent visions of the future—visions of crowns and glory, such as attend the dawn of every young poet. But the brightness of his rising did not eclipse the glow of old affection, or

lessen its wholesome warmth in his heart. He wished, with innocent, loving vanity, that his mother had been alive to see that day, and his first impulse when the book was ready was to send a copy of it, accompanied by a most affectionate letter, to his brother Robert at Walton Minster; and I think he had more anxiety that the book should please him, than he had pleasure in the admiration of all his other admirers put together.

The volume came to Robert by the hand of Lady Leigh, who had been passing the season at Sir Philip's house in town. The ancient dame arrived at her residence on the Minster Hill late in the evening of a fine June day; but she had brought Cyrus's parcel loose in the carriage, and Sempronius was despatched to deliver it in Maiden Lane immediately. It had been a busy day at the varnish manufactory, and Robert was only just setting out for a stroll into the fields to refresh himself when he received it, but, altering his intentions, he walked off delightedly with his acquisition to Peter Carlton's.

Peter and he had struck up an intimacy some

years before—an intimacy which had ripened into a friendship of habits and sympathy. Many a long discussion had they held on poets and poetry in general, and many a dream had they indulged of the place Cyrus was to take in the ranks of the immortals. The brothers had not met for more than six years, but Robert's love and veneration for Cyrus were as intense as ever, and the organist was the person of all others whom he could best talk to about him. He scarcely felt the ground under his feet, as he sped away towards the Minster and across its burdened graveyard, to the dim old house on its farther side. He opened the door for himself, and stumbled up the dark, wide staircase, into the room where Peter was just settling himself at his organ, to play some favourite anthem in the twilight, exclaiming—

“Light the lamp, Peter! Cyr's book is out at last; here it is—behold it!” and he waved it above his head enthusiastically.

Such a fuss over a brother's book! It sounds very simple in Robert Hawthorne, certainly, to traverse a town at dusk as if he had got wings

to his feet, and to burst in on an old man's musical reveries as if with the news of an earthquake. But in those days everybody's brother, or sister, or cousin, had not written a book; people's minds had fermented in another and less peaceable fashion, and produced works of a different character, from the turmoil of which the world was calming down — calming down thankfully, and with the most tame willingness, to be amused. There has been a wonderful outpouring of printer's ink in these latter years, but when Cyrus Hawthorne Nugent was young, to have written a book was rather a feather in a man's cap; and Robert, in his loving simplicity, was inclined to regard his brother's as a very fine feather indeed.

Peter Carlton ran out upon the stairs, and called over the banisters to his housekeeper, Tibbie, to bring a light; but she was so leisurely in her movements that they had to wait full ten minutes before the keen edge of their curiosity could be taken off. But, at last, with the lamp between them, they sat down, one on either side of the ponderous oak table, and with eager fingers Robert tore off the covers of the precious

volume until it lay revealed—a slim, grey, paper-bound octavo with a white label on the back, inscribed—“Poems by C. H. Nugent.”

“Poems by C. H. Nugent,” said Robert, holding it off proudly to contemplate the effect of the beautiful words at a distance.

Peter clasped his thin, yellow hands under his chin, and repeated them after him with low-voiced solemnity. He could not have spoken otherwise in sight of Robert's flushed face and bright eyes; his young emotion was far too sincere for raillery.

“It is a great epoch in Cyr's life, Peter; he is fairly launched now,” said Robert, warmly. “Who knows how far he may go. He was always ambitious,” and then he opened the book. “‘To my brother! to my brother!’ do you hear, Peter? I knew there was nothing that could ever take his love away from me; dear, dear, old Cyr!” and the young fellow kept his hand shading his eyes for a minute or two, looking at the dedication, which wavered up and down as you may have seen light waver on a running water.

“Now for some of the poems,” suggested Peter, after a quite long enough pause.

“Go to your organ, Peter, and make some of your grand music; let me have Cyr’s thoughts to myself first; it seems as if I were going to see into his heart after all these years of separation. I did not think I should feel it so,” Robert pleaded.

The organist moved away to his instrument, and filled the dusky house with melody to its remotest corner; while Robert, leaning his head upon his hand, turned over leaf after leaf of the little book, greedily devouring every line. Yes; *devouring*. He did not taste and criticise, and taste again, as a connoisseur or cool-blooded critic might do, but he read *all* in perfect faith; that *all* was beautiful. But there were some that charmed him more than others: indeed, I fear that there were several resounding, speculative, spasmodic strains that he hardly understood; but there were others full of a tender, human interest, many of them touching on familiar scenes of long ago, and dear old associations which would have hallowed the rudest rhymes ever

tyro penned. "The Graveyard on the Cliff," was a picture of that silent place where their mother lay buried; the humble church, with its background of elms and chesnuts, the calm sea far below, creeping over the shingles with a soft, sighing sound, as if it spoke out of the depths of its great heart consolation to mourners, rose up before Robert's memory as vividly as the reality. He saw it, and the green mound and the low headstone, and the sunshine glancing through the thick trees to brighten its old time-mossed walls. There was another piece, very touching and pathetic, "She who loved us;" also a reminiscence of their mother, which caused the tears to swell hotly into Robert's eyes; and when he came to the following verse—the last in a poem on their own boyhood—he was fain to dash the glittering drops away with his hand. The simple lines had the prevision of what might be in them, and sounded like an appeal:—

"We have but each other, Robin,
In the wide, wide world to trust;
For the love of our mother, Robin,
Let us be true and just:

True and just to each other, Robin,
Whatever ill tongues may say;
Hoping the best of each other, Robin,
Through the darkest and dourlest day."

"Only be you as faithful to me, Cyr, as I'll be steady to you, and neither of us will ever want a trusty friend," cried Robert.

"I believe that; I do believe that, indeed, Robert," said Peter, from his place at the organ; he had paused a moment, and glanced round, to see what chance there was of his having his turn at the poetry book. No chance at all yet; Robert had not nearly finished with it, short as most of the pieces were.

But there were a few long ballads treating of love and courage, and all high and holy deeds and passions; there were some sweet lyrics, breathing music even in the silent lines, and some fierce denunciations of social shams and tyrannies, that betrayed the hot young blood. Over all there was the richness, the wildness, the exuberance of an unchastened fancy; but from first to last, there was not one mean or coward thought, one weak or wanton sentiment. As Robert read,

his pride in his brother increased ; his heart glowed within him.

Meanwhile, Peter Carlton continued to play his deep, resounding strains ; and, as he played, his lean, sallow countenance was all transfigured to an air of nobleness. Every feature, every limb of him in its acute tension, bespoke the enthusiast in his art. He was no longer in the low-ceiled, panelled, age-begrimed room, environed by every-day signs of use and homeliness, but in some grand old minster waking the sonorous echoes of its ghostly aisles. Long rolling in the arched roof, the melody came back to him as from another sphere, softened and refined. When he ceased at last, Robert found that he had been unconsciously listening for some time past with the poetry book shut. Peter sat silent a minute or two, moving his long fingers over the keys without eliciting any sound, and then turned to his young friend.

“ You are a wizard, Peter ; you beguiled me away from Cyr’s ‘ Dream of the Angels,’ ” said Robert, reopening the page.

“The music chimed in with the song, Robert—the music chimed in with the song,” replied the organist. “Music and poetry are termed sisters. Read on now, and let me hear your brother’s golden words.”

Robert needed no second bidding. Cyr’s golden words, as Peter was pleased to call them, flowed from his tongue melodiously. He read *The Dream*, which he had chosen out already as his supreme favourite, with deep feeling for its mournful tenderness. It was homely and poor in comparison with many of the pieces, but oh! how it touched him and the elder man too.

“Let me hear that again, Robert,” the organist once interrupted him to say, and Robert repeated the passage :—

“Through the mists of the Hereafter,
In the Land Eternal dwelling,
Beyond the flood, the bitter flood of death,
Beyond the dark and turbid swelling,
Of all earthly strife;
They are waiting for us, watching,
Watching, longing, hoping, praying,
In the Land Eternal!

"All who loved us, all our darlings,
Gone before us o'er the deep;
Moving through our lives as shadows,
Dim as visions of our sleep,
Live now the better life.
We shall see their holy faces,
We shall hear their loving voices,
In the Land Eternal!"

"Lilian's mother is there, Robert," said Peter, softly; "she was scarcely more than a girl when she died."

There was a few minutes' pause, and then Robert read on to the end of the poem.

"I am not sure that the creed your brother seems to have got hold of will *quite* square with the Protestant faith," the organist observed dubiously, and Robert himself seemed rather puzzled at some of the closing sentiments of the piece. "However," added Peter, cheerfully, "we must allow all thoughtful young men, thoughtful young poets especially, to have their speculations. It is a phase of mind they pass through as wine passes through fermentation, to become clearer and stronger in the end."

Peter's argument appeared no sounder than Cyrus's religious views, but Robert suffered it to pass, and Peter went on to say what strange hearts

those people must have who believe that we shall carry none of our earthly affections and interests into the other life. "When I think of dying, my dearest hope is to see Lucy again," he said, pathetically. "Ay, and I *shall* see her! Heaven would be no heaven to me, but a place of strangers, if I did not see her sweet face first of all."

"Well, Peter, it is lucky for both of us that we are not bound to accept the vagaries of our great preachers as revelations. Dean Mauleverer gave us a picture of hell in his last Sunday morning's discourse—you would hear it?"

"Yes, I have heard it three times, but I am in no wise scared *yet*. Robert, isn't it a marvellous thing how men, learned in most other matters, can get up into a pulpit and string together sentence after sentence as hollow as a drum, and lies every one, attributing to the great and merciful God acts that in a man we should have no scruple in calling devilish? False interpreters are they surely of the words of Him who is justice, mercy, truth, and love beyond all our understanding. There are awful things scattered up and down in His book, but I leave 'em alone. In my own in-

dividual person I have far more need of His tenderness than of His judgment, and I've a real comfort in reflecting that neither Dean Mauleverer nor any other member of any one of the many sects into which the Christian Church is split nowadays will have a voice on the Great Judgment Day, unless it be to cry for mercy on themselves."

"We may all be grateful for that. Hard measure would some of them deal to each other if they had the chance. Charity's garments are of fashion very short and scrimp as some denouncing pietists fit them by the line and rule of their own creed."

"A just observation, young man, a very just observation. Christianity, which is a system of love and charity embodied, was made for a universal world, not for a walled-in screed of it, as first one and then another new-light apostle preaches. But go on with the poems, Robert, for it seems to me that we shall get as heterodox as Cyrus if we discuss these questions any longer, and a heterodox organist who dare rail at deans will not reign long in the loft of Walton Minster."

"But it is late, Peter—you know my uncle's rules; I must be going home."

"You are all in good time; it is only striking half-past nine by the Minster now. If you wait, we shall have Lilian—the child will not go to bed without running over for five minutes to see her old father when she has been so long away. So read on to pass the time."

Robert opened the book and was just about to resume, when through the window, set wide to admit the summer evening air, a rush of light feet was heard on the pavement below. Peter stalked to the door and opened it with a hasty jerk. There was a flash and flutter of something white against the blackness of the yawning stair, and then Lilian came in.

IV.

Lilian came in; a slender, shy, virginal thing, rosy with delight at her return to her father after a three months' absence; pleased to be told that she had grown taller, older, prettier; pleased to

see him so glad, pleased with everything; a creature fair as a flower, and full of the frolic of childhood just merging into sweet maidenhood; out of breath with racing down the Minster Hill and across the graveyard, her dark hood flown back from her head, her mantle clasped at the throat with one tiny gloveless hand; not a trace of travel-weariness about her, body and spirit radiant with the verve and glow of youth.

When she had embraced her father, she glanced towards Robert Hawthorne, who stood up and bowed before her less in recognition than in homage, and she returned the courtesy with the formal stateliness of her fine breeding. A moment or two, and then, as if the occasion called for something more, she said :

“I saw Mr. Cyrus, your brother, the day before we left London. Have you received the present Lady Leigh was to bring you from him?”

“Yes, Sempronius brought it to Maiden Lane this evening,” and Robert showed the volume in his hand.

“I know it—it is his poetry. Everybody was

talking about it in town. They say it is full of genius."

Robert coloured high with gratification at the words from such beautiful lips.

"You know Cyrus well?" said he, eagerly. "Tell me what he is like now—it is so long since I have seen him—not since we were boys."

"What is he like?" repeated Lilian, with a reflective, painstaking air. "He is like Sir Philip Nugent in the face, but he is not so tall; he is not so tall as you, and he is dark complexioned. He has an ardent fiery look, Lady Leigh says, not the look of a common-place person at all. Everybody admires him, and everybody likes him. Sometimes he is very lively and amusing, but not always, and I think he is *very* proud."

"Poor Cyr, so he was long ago, but he was always a favourite—nobody could help loving him," said Robert, gratefully.

Here Peter interposed, asking, "Well, Lilian, let me hear something about yourself now. What charmed you most in Babylon the Great? Did you hear any fine music? did you go to any grand *sights*?"

"Both music and sights enough, father, and I had some lessons with masters. It was a pleasant time, but I am glad to be home again."

Peter Carlton caressed his daughter and told her she was a good girl, and he hoped they should live by them two selves some day. Meanwhile Robert Hawthorne passed unobserved from the room and left them alone. Then Lilian's tongue was loosed to good purpose, and she told her father of all the great singers and musicians whom Lady Leigh had taken or sent her to hear. Lady Leigh was very liberal in encouraging her *protégée's* taste for music. This was Peter's pet subject, and his poor ears ached with envy to hear them too. But for him there were no delightful holidays for visiting that far-off London, and no spare ten-pound notes to carry him there either.

"I shall die without beholding my mother's Italy, and without hearing any of the famous men and women you talk about so familiarly, Lily," said he, half laughing, half sighing.

"Who knows, father? you may become quite a pilgrim, and go to pay homage at all the

shrines, living and dead, that you love to think of."

"Who knows, indeed, Lily, when we cannot see a hand's breadth into the future? But come and listen; I have been getting up this glorious mass for you, and I am sure you will like it. You must hear a part to-night;" and the enthusiast moved off to his organ. Lilian had promised Lady Leigh not to stay long, but she could not resist her father's wish to give her pleasure; so she lingered and lingered, until a full hour had elapsed. The moon was up and shining brightly when Peter took her home and left her at Lady Leigh's garden door. She had to receive a sharp reproof from her patroness, but then she had her reward in thinking she had made her father happy.

V.

Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, on hearing of Lady Leigh's civility to Robert, told him that it was incumbent upon him to go and deliver his thanks

in person; and, with less reluctance than might have been anticipated, the young man donned his Sunday suit and went. Sempronius, as he afterwards confessed, mistook him for a gentleman and ushered him straight to her ladyship's morning room, where she received her most familiar friends,

Lady Leigh was sitting in her great tapestry chair with her gold-headed stick leant up beside her, dictating a letter to Lilian Carlton at the writing-table, and at the same time wielding two immensely long ivory knitting-needles, with which she had but a few minutes before chastised a black-eyed little damsel, who was now ornamenting a remote corner of the room and scowling at her patroness over her shoulder like an incipient thunderstorm. She was the last *protégée* of the Walton benefactress of orphans, a child of half-Spanish blood, with a thin olive cheek, lips like the scarlet pomegranate, and a mass of loose hanging, rather coarse black hair. If excitement was what Lady Leigh coveted in the management of her charges, Lola certainly seemed likely to give her enough of it. Poor Madame Lefevre was not

there; Death had kindly dispensed her from further exile and further servitude, and dismissed her home; but instead of giving her a successor, as Lilian Carlton grew up into a fair, intelligent, gently-nurtured girl, her patroness gradually advanced her to the post of half companion and half pet, and found herself greatly advantaged thereby.

As Robert Hawthorne entered the room Lady Leigh immediately recognised him, and a deep red suffused her dark face as she loftily returned his bow of profound respect. They had never met since, as a boy, he had rejected all her offers of patronage; but she remembered that time much more vividly than he did, because it had been to her ever since a secret mortification and disappointment. Perhaps even yet she felt a grudge against him on account of it, for she was not a woman of a placable temper. She waved her hand towards a chair as a sign that she wished him to be seated, and bade Lilian Carlton retire to a distant table. Robert coloured too, and the speech of elaborate thanks that he had been composing and polishing ever since he left the breakfast table in Maiden Lane entirely slipped his memory, and he said,

with a straightforward simplicity which was both more pleasing and more effective—

“I have come to thank your ladyship for remembering me and my brother’s parcel when you arrived last night.”

“Will you not be seated?” said the great lady, rather softened. “I never forget my friends’ commissions, and your brother Cyrus is a favourite of mine. You have read his little book through already—*that* I scarcely need ask.”

“Yes, last night, before I slept.”

“Well, it is a pretty beginning for him. He is one of the most promising and attractive young men I have ever known. He is already distinguished, and if he goes on as well as he has begun, his own genius will override all obstacles. But are *you* pleased or disappointed? I tell Cyrus that his book is less brilliant than himself; and I want to know what the melancholy vein in it signifies. Is it the intuitive perception of genius into the evils to come? I remark that young poets are mostly dismal—what are they dismal for?”

“I cannot enlighten your ladyship, but I think I can understand my brother.”

"The poetic element is not strongly developed in you; if I remember rightly, you were always devoted to the prose of life?"

Robert bowed assent to this sarcasm, and, glancing towards the other end of the room, he encountered Lilian Carlton's eyes. They immediately reverted to her secretary work, but not before he had seen the wistful, half-laughing curiosity they expressed. Lady Leigh detected the momentary meeting of these two pairs of young eyes and coughed ominously; she perceived that the devotee of the prose of life had soul enough to feel the influence of maiden beauty.

"Lola, if you are good, you may come out of the corner and go play," said she; and a moment after, "Lilian, go with her."

Robert furtively watched Lilian's gentle movements as she put her papers together, and acknowledged her formal curtsy with a bow as formal. But once or twice after she was gone out, he answered Lady Leigh's remarks at very queer cross purposes, while he was speculating internally when and where he should see her again; and having his attention fixed on the window, he

presently observed her with Lola going down the shrubbery: all at once remembering that he had accomplished his mission of presenting his thanks to Lady Leigh, it struck him that he ought to go. This time she said not a single word of his coming again, and perhaps the young man felt a little mortified.

The dark little girl and Lilian were gathering posies in the borders as he passed on his way to the gate, and Lilian looked up at him with a smile, as if she would like to speak were the chance given her. Robert paused, of course, and asked if she thought her father well when she saw him the night before—he was not usually bashful, but it was strange how confused he got over the common-place question. Lilian replied that she thought her father looking^g very well, and that she thanked Robert very much for his kindness to him in her absence.

There was a shrill imperative tinkle of Lady Leigh's bell as she spoke, and little Lola exclaimed, with mischievous, precocious malice—

“My Lady Leigh sees you from her window—that ring is for you, Lilian; come away!”

Lilian dropped her flowers from her gathered-up apron in the sudden jerk, Lola gave her arm, and, before Robert could collect and restore them to her, Lady Leigh's bell sounded again. She went off hastily, half laughing, and Robert could not be quite sure whether the glow on her face was a blush or merely a soft reflection from the rose-coloured bows under her hat. She had a lovely face, whichever it was; such a serene, bright face as will haunt an unoccupied imagination weeks and months after it has passed from actual vision—haunt it so steadily, so pertinaciously that, at last, the heart takes its impression too, and holds it as a precious memory.

Robert Hawthorne's imagination of twenty was susceptible to beauty, as most young men's imaginations are, and Lilian Carlton's face began to blend itself from this day forth with many a deeply cherished though long unspoken thought. If he had possessed his brother's genius, he would have rhymed her into immortality—rhymed upon her as a divinity most likely; that being the light in which the youthful mind inclines to contemplate what it adores. The divinities do not become

women until by and by. It is not till the smoke declines that the fire burns ardently—not till airy fancies evaporate that passion begins to glow.

VI.

Most men's and women's lives advance only step by step along tracks beaten level already by thousands, by millions of mortal feet that have trodden them through shine and shower and ceased from the earth generation after generation, in weariness and quietness. Great events are not common in individual experience; we may sometimes think they are, but it is that we each of us magnify our private joys and sorrows into a vast importance, and only in sight of the grand consummation of all things do they diminish to their real weight and worth. Here and there one straying from the highway falls over a precipice and is lost; another climbs a mole-hill and fancies himself a giant amongst his fellows; a third, with the seal of God on his forehead, leaves light behind for the guidance

and warning of wayfarers yet to follow. But the mass walk, or stumble, or crawl along, undistinguished and undistinguishing; no one knowing their numbers, no one seeing their cares, trials, and temptations, no one heeding them but the All-Father. We have been told how He regards them; how He discriminates each unit of the moving myriads: and, I suppose, on an occasion, most of us can make shift to remember and confess it; confess it in general terms, that is; admitting that we are all of one common clay, that we have all the same beginning and the same ending—the same bodies to cherish and the same souls to save.

But from the supercilious tone each caste, even yet, adopts towards those below it we may well doubt the acceptance of these lip-acknowledged truths in hearts whose pride they fail to leaven. It is a curious study to observe how each little clique of humanity has its lower class to look down upon with a comfortable superiority. How the wholesale dealer in penny wares ignores the retail vendor thereof; how the spruce professional holds himself aloof from vulgar trade; and how

the great man, the patriarchal squire of many descents, traceable back for centuries, the great man high above them all, esteems them all alike, and clans them *en masse* as the middle orders. Yet the shades of difference are infinite and infinitesimal; only we must be dwelling amongst them to discern them: from such lofty eminences as those on which forty years ago stood my Lady Leigh they are quite imperceptible.

The opinions she held and expounded have not yet ceased to prevail amongst remote and semi-civilized communities—nay, let me be bold and say at once that they have not ceased to prevail wherever they prevailed when she lived and reigned in Walton. Caste is as strong as ever, though exclusivism may have lowered its head and partaken occasionally of humble-pie with quite low-born people, but in her day it was a power in the State. The skilful surgeon who saved her ladyship's life in more than one grievous sickness came to her ladyship's back door, and talked to her ladyship's butler in the servants' hall until summoned to feel her ladyship's pulse. The Reverend Paul Wilson, a

devout, learned, hard-working, young curate, the son of a small farmer in the neighbourhood, a foundation boy at the grammar school, a prize man and fellow at college, shared her ladyship's luncheon occasionally, but never her solemn repasts of state with far less worthy pillars of the Church; nevertheless, when the waters of affliction were stirred about her ladyship's soul, it was at his lips that she sought her spiritual help and consolation. He had a gift that way, she said, and must be a blessing amongst the poor and distressed. In her own sight and in that of Walton generally, she was a highly consistent Christian woman, but she would have been astonished and indignant had any one dared to suggest that these people were her equals, perhaps *more*—perhaps her superiors in all that constitutes real worth. It has been said before that my Lady Leigh's prejudices were very strong. To the really poor and humble she was charitable, considerate, and kind, though domineering; but a *shopkeeper* she could not abide; a shopkeeper in the abstract, that is; for to the tradespeople whom she herself patronized she was very civil. She

uttered the word "shopkeeper" with contempt. To her imagination it presented ideas of vulgar ostentatious wealth amongst the best, and of ignorance, arrogance, coarseness of mind, coarseness of manners, greed, overreaching, and meanness amongst the baser sort—all the odious, petty vices from which the refined mind revolts. She could not have mated her plausible generalities with a tangible fact through all the round of her experience, but that was of small consequence. My Lady Leigh's ideal of a shopkeeper was so and so, upset it who could. The appearance of young Robert Hawthorne in her own house had awakened this slumbering dislike in her mind. In the afternoon it happened that Lady Nugent visited her sister-in-law, and after more interesting themes had been exhausted he became the subject of conversation. Lilian Carlton and Mistress Alice Johnes were both in the presence.

"Helena, I have had Cyrus's brother here this morning; I had brought him the little book of poems, and he came to acknowledge it," said Lady Leigh, casually.

Lady Nugent exclaimed—"Indeed!" and looked for further information.

"He is a superior young man; quite out of his place as a shopkeeper; but, I suppose, as he grows older and is more mixed up with that sort of people, he will become just as vulgar and coarse as the rest of them."

Mistress Alice Johnes seemed fidgeted; she had shopkeeping cousins in Wales; and even Lilian coloured a little, and looked at her patroness with something very like a sparkle of anger in her beautiful eyes.

"Why vulgar and coarse, Augusta?" remonstrated Lady Nugent. "I always liked his countenance and air."

"He has a fine person; indeed, he is handsomer than Cyrus—but I am not speaking of that. His tone must be bad."

"Is his manner obtrusive? What do you mean?"

"No, not obtrusive; his manner is quite what it should be. No, not quite what it should be for a shopkeeper, but only quite what it should be for—for himself, in fact. He has the same

spirit he had when a boy, and I can see that he forgets nothing."

"He shows self-respect, Augusta, that is it, and therefore I do not see why he need sink at all. Mr. Joshua Hawthorne, who has had his bringing up, is a highly deserving person, and, yes—you may laugh, Augusta, but I do not know anywhere a more courteous old man—he has a fine manner—you have said so yourself before now, and only half in jest."

"I admit it—he is quite an old bean; I do not know where he learnt his graces."

"Allow them to be innate; good feeling and good manners are rarely separated. Perhaps Robert employs his leisure in some of those scientific or artistic pursuits that Philip says are rather cultivated amongst young men nowadays; collecting geological specimens or butterflies, or classifying plants, I mean; or perhaps he reads, and reading always elevates the tone of people's minds."

Lady Leigh smiled again indulgently, and with these suggestions Robert Hawthorne was dropped quietly back into his obscurity.

VII.

I feel bound in honesty to confess, however, that Robert Hawthorne did not sustain and improve his mind as Lady Nugent encouraged her sister-in-law to hope. His acquaintance with geology was limited to a vague recollection of the treatises he had read on the sunny door-step of the old schoolhouse at Chinelyn, under Master Scrope's supervision, and his knowledge of butterflies and flowers to observations made during field and wayside walks with Dorothea and George Sancton, after the long day's work in Maiden Lane was ended. On Sundays and winter-nights he read a good deal; but his taste, and indeed his opportunities, lay chiefly amongst old-fashioned books, such as were also his uncle's favourites. These he knew thoroughly; the standard poets—read for Cyrus's sake—Izaak Walton's *Lives*, George Herbert's and Bishop Leighton's works, and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* were familiar to him, and from his preferring these and

such as these to lighter books, it will be understood that the tone of the young man's mind was grave—almost too grave for his years—and possibly rather narrow. You see, he had not had the advantage of an enlarged education, and while still very young, he had been fixed down amongst the practicalities of what was to be to the end his station in life.

People who do not know this kind of existence, would hardly believe how sufficing it is when encountered consistently and conscientiously ; how it can even stave off the boredom which will often assail actively pursued pleasure, as well as luxurious do-nothingness ; how, in fact, good men, and men who, with wider opportunities, might have been great, will go through with it for their three-score years and ten, and die in the satisfaction of having done their appointed duty in their day and generation, full as well as men of far higher mark in the world. Robert Hawthorne suited his condition, and it suited him. His boyish discontents had vanished from it as morning mists vanish when the sun strengthens to midday heat.

A full number of hours' work on work-days and leisure evenings, all the more precious for their brevity, carried him on insensibly from week to week, and month to month. In and out at Peter Carlton's, in and out at Miss Kibblewhite's, had been for a year or two back his liveliest enjoyments. He was very fond of George Sancton, and he looked upon Dorothea as a most sage and pleasant elder sister, and all the family at the tea-shop, including a little dogges called Prim, which Dorothea had recently adopted, were very fond of him. As for that fantastical old woman, Mrs. Deborah Eliotson, she regarded him with as little favour as ever, only she had grown more cautious about how she attempted to do him any disservice.

You may think these but bald materials wherewith to furnish forth the opening of any man's life, but is not every life full of a pettiness of detail, a continuous monotony of repetition? This is the well-trodden road we all travel, while throbbing in every breast amongst us is a heart to love, to endure, to enjoy, and to suffer; and let the track be rough or smooth, high or low, there

will be times on the journey when every wayfarer's heart will expand to embrace a joy or contract under the sting of a sharp agony, and Robert Hawthorne shall no more escape than his fellows.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

EBB AND FLOW.

"THERE is a garden in her face,
 Where roses and white lilies grow;
 A heavenly paradise is that place,
 Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow;
 There cherries grow that none may buy,
 Till cherry-ripe themselves do cry.

"Her eyes like angels watch them still,
 Her brows like bended bows do stand,
 Threatening with piercing frowns to kill
 All that approach with eye or hand
 These sacred cherries to come nigh,
 Till cherry-ripe themselves do cry."

An Houre's Recreation in Musicks.

RICHARD ALLISON, 1606.

I.

THE feast of St. Wilfred was always kept as a high day and holiday among the richest and poorest of the people of Walton. The Minster bells rang it in cheerily, before the drowsy town was half astir, and everybody rose up with festive

intentions. These homely merry-makings are gone out of fashion nowadays; we have learnt to enjoy ourselves in a severer and discreeter manner; but our grandfathers and grandmothers, in the middle class especially, made of them great events;—made of them times for reunion of scattered kinsfolk, for the healing of quarrels, and bringing together again of divided friends. The feast fell early in August, when the trees about the market-cross were full of a dusky green shadow, when the last of the hay-harvest was ingathered, and the first of the reaping was not begun; so that the country people were free to come in crowds to partake of the moderate dissipations of the fair times.

The bow window of old-maid Kibblewhite's best parlour overlooked on this occasion the busiest scene of all the year. The swing-boats, the whirligigs, the shows, with their discordant bands of music, and delusive exterior delineations of giants, dwarfs, and two-headed beasts, were ranged along the upper end of the market-place, and skirting the pavement stood the stalls of children's toys, of sweeties for the treating of sweethearts, with fluttering warblers, dream-books,

and fortune-telling books, in gorgeous covers, hanging from the laths that supported their awnings. Mistress Nannie Brigget and her *commères* abandoned for the nonce their baskets of plump poultry and fresh eggs, and sat, like venerable Pomonas, amidst teeming stores of fruit, ripe and luscious, rosy and purple and golden, dealing out lavish ha'porths to the youngsters that patronized them. Market-day or fair-day, Nannie Brigget never lacked excess of customers; but the favourite who always had the pick of her treasures at St. Wilfred's was Dorothea Sancton.

From early morning, Dorothea kept a casual watch upon the stands round the Cross until she saw her ancient friend established among her blushing heaps of fruit; then away she went with her basket to cull of the choicest to furnish forth the hospitable table of old-maid Kibblewhite, who entertained that day relatives, friends, and select customers amongst the farmers' wives according to her immemorial practice. Any time for six or eight years back Dorothea had supported the burden and responsibility of this important gathering, and very well she had supported it too; for as she

gained in years she gained also in gravity and solidity of person and character.

Nannie Brigget used always to greet her on St. Wilfred's privileged morning with the same pertinent questions—"Well, Mistress Dorothy, *who ha' yo gotten to gi' ye yer fairings to year?*" But Dorothea never needed to blush; for, while her young companions were "wooded, an' married an' a'," she still remained uncourted in her old aunt's ingle nook; her stiff tiers of curls losing annually a little of their natural gloss, and her cheeks becoming less rosily variable each successive season. Her brother George was quite the young man now, with a sanguine young man's amiable appreciation of the charms of blue eyes, coral lips, and plump contours, in the person of little Nellie Constant, the bachelor clerk's housekeeping niece; and her friend Robert Hawthorne had long since overtopped her by a very handsome head and shoulders. She used sometimes to say, with a laugh that was not all mirth, that she thought she was growing down in the world. But, never mind, Dorothea, keep a good heart! There will come a St. Wilfred's

some day, if not this year, nor the next, nor the next after that, when your fit work will be given you to do and your pre-ordained vocation will be discovered; when you will bless God and be thankful; though if they were revealed to you now, you might be tempted to rebel, and to protest that they were a long way from realizing any of your visions of happiness.

But if Dorothea had not her one special donor of fairings, no particular Johnny who "promised to buy her a bunch of blue ribbons to tie up her bonny brown hair," she had many old friends who never forgot her. Mr. Joshua Hawthorne and Mr. Reuben Otley always made her a present in the name of her father, their former servant, which kept the thrifty and prudent damsel not only in blue ribbons, but in more substantial attire, from one St. Wilfred's to another; and Robert Hawthorne, from the first of their acquaintance, had always esteemed himself privileged to come with an offering in his hand on this particular festival. At first, it was only a sixpenny red-velvet pincushion, heart-shaped and stuffed with bran, until it was as hard as a

stone; but as he grew older and possessed ampler pocket money, he had gradually developed a generous taste in shell-work boxes, Russia leather housewives, and even little articles of personal adornment, by which Dorothea of late years had come to set great store, treasuring them in a place by themselves and letting them grow as old-fashioned as if they had come out of the ark, before she could prevail upon herself to put them to their natural use. Dorothea Sancton was not a sentimental character, but she sometimes had rather soft and sentimental feelings, as she contemplated Robert Hawthorne's boyish gifts—fairings as he called them—sentimental feelings which would have astonished Robert had he been vain enough to suspect them, which he was not. The lad always had a modest and humble appreciation of himself, but as the manly down on his cheek darkened, he, too, had his secret worship of one bright particular star, and all the other stars in the firmament shone for him in vain; even the domestic lustre, Dorothea, was dull and earthly in comparison with Lilian. At this date, when Robert Hawthorne was twenty,

she was scarcely gay fifteen ; as innocent and thoughtless, and wilful and petulant, as was the little Lilian he and George Sancton had coaxed out of her sorrow six years ago, by chairing her round Miss Kibblewhite's parlour, sitting on their crossed arms.

II.

Miss Kibblewhite's dinner always took place at the primitive hour of noon, and before two o'clock all the guests were again dispersed to visit shops or stalls as their taste inclined, and Dorothea was free to enjoy what had long been to her the pleasantest part of the day. The doings of fairs please young folks of all conditions, I believe, and Lady Leigh's *protégées* were no exceptions to the general rule. As none of the stir penetrated to the seclusion on the Minster hill, she, therefore, permitted them to accept Miss Kibblewhite's annual invitation to sit in her bow window and look out upon the noisy Market-place while the fun was at its height during an hour

or two of the afternoon. Under the escort of Mistress Hilton and Sempronius, now become a pompous serious footman, Lilian and Lola arrived as usual, and having handed them over to the safe custody of Dorothea, serving-man and serving-maid went off to spend their own holiday in inspecting the interior of the shows.

Dorothea, as a matter of course, always kept a reserve of Nanny Brigget's finest fruit for her pet Lilian and little Lola, and they enjoyed it as thoroughly as any of the ha'penny-spending urchins in the turmoil below. Lilian appreciated a holiday with Dorothea, who was mother and elder sister and friend all in one to her, and Lola's swarthy cheeks and great black eyes glowed with the exhilarating sense of a rare freedom. It was tacitly understood by Lady Leigh, that while her children were in Miss Kibblewhite's best parlour, none of the old maid's more homely friends should be admitted there, and great was Dorothea's dismay when Robert Hawthorne—full three hours earlier than it was his custom to pay his visits—walked upstairs and in amongst them with a pretty French basket, containing a measure of nuts, in

his hand, and told her he had brought her some fairings.

It was a very hot sunshiny afternoon and Lilian had flung off hat and pelerin, and was seated upon a low footstool with her arm on the window-sill, and her round dimpled chin resting upon it, while her pretty soft eyes brightened over the humours of the fair. She blushed a little, but she certainly laughed, and Robert, though at first disconcerted by Dorothea's look of surprise, drew up a chair into the bow, and, pouring the nuts into her lap, invited the girls to crack and eat. Now Lilian liked nuts—but she was rather shy or proud, or, perhaps, she was only reluctant to crack Robert's nuts, for she *said* she did not care for them much. Not so Lola. Dropping on her knees in front of Dorothea, she plunged her hand amongst them, and set her white little teeth to work with all the skill and vivacity of a squirrel—utterly repudiating her turn at the crackers, a solitary pair, which furnished Miss Kibblewhite's establishment.

Robert did not eat any himself, but he was very dexterous in discovering the largest kernels

and extracting them whole, an operation which Lilian furtively observed, observing also the length and beauty of his hands, which were true Nugent hands, and wondering how, as a tradesman, he could keep them so white and perfect in shape; for she had some very queer mistaken notions of his occupations: she, perhaps, thought that in private life he became as soiled and grim as old Tom Aldin; or that he slaved bodily at making casks and filling them, and that he washed his face at the pump in the yard and changed his coat and took off a great apron before he appeared in the street—which was not *quite* the fact. When Robert had made a little heap of these best kernels, he divided them and offered one share to Dorothea and the other to Lilian, and this time Lilian made a rosy tinted cup of her two hands and permitted him to pour them in, afterwards munching them up with great apparent relish.

“You *do* like them,” said Robert, with a fine blush and a little air of pleased excitement, and Lilian nodded and said,

“Yes.”

“All gone!” cried Lola, tossing up a handful

of the empty shells, "All gone!" and Robert sallied forth to buy another measure.

"I am afraid Lady Leigh would be displeased if she knew of Robert Hawthorne being here," suggested Dorothea, doubtfully.

"Oh, never mind! it's fun!" said Lola. "I like him; he is Cyrus's brother."

Lilian said nothing, but only looked out of the window to where Robert was standing at a stall receiving the nuts. He came back up-stairs ever so many steps at a time; but Miss Kibblewhite, who had been shut up with a friend in the back parlour before, heard him and followed. She gave Dorothea a glance of reproof, but Dorothea, who in her heart loved a bit of mischief, said, out loud,

"It is not my fault, indeed, aunt," and Robert, who suspected what it meant, blushed guiltily, but tried to seem unconscious.

Miss Kibblewhite had too many duties demanding her presence elsewhere to permit her to mount guard over the young folks then, and she was obliged to leave them to their innocent talk and laughter and nut-cracking and genuine enjoyment. They were very happy, none the less

happy, perhaps, for the secret little feeling amongst them of being like a set of children out of bounds and fearing to be caught.

“Do you know,” said Lola, with a wilful toss of her mane, “I like this better than dignity;” at which everybody laughed assent. That little hour of irregular enjoyment was better than a year of afternoons of dignity. Robert did not stay very long, however; and when nothing of the second measure of nuts remained but empty shells, he took up the pretty basket he had brought them in, filled it with Dorothea’s silks and worsteds, hung it on her frame, and went away.

“You will come back to tea?” Dorothea cried after him.

“Oh, yes, certainly,” replied he; and I daresay Lilian would have liked to be asked to tea too, but such was not her fate; at four o’clock Mistress Hilton and Sempronius reappeared and conveyed their young charges back to “dignity” and the Minster hill.

III.

Robert Hawthorne did not become less constant in his visits to Peter Carlton, although, now that Lilian was come back, the organist could not complain of being all day long alone. Lilian generally appeared at the Minster prayers of an afternoon, and afterwards went home with him to make his solitary tea. Lady Leigh had granted her this indulgence at the instance of her sister, and both father and daughter highly appreciated it. And about three times a week, as Lilian sat in the low old-fashioned window-seat with some task of household needlework, too delicate for Tibbie's bad sight and clumsy fingers, she used to see Robert Hawthorne's fine tall figure coming down the Minster hill, and through the gate into the churchyard; when he had got thus far, her eyes always reverted to her sewing and her fingers plied the needle diligently, but for all that seeming industry she could listen to the even beat of his

footstep coming across to the house, and could tell the exact moment when he would knock at the door and Tibbie would let him in. It was not often that he passed by the house and out at the other gate, but sometimes he did, and then Lilian would look up at the sky and down at the graves and abroad at the trees, and feel rather as if she were disappointed—rather as if she had missed something.

And Robert, as soon as he had passed through the churchyard gate, could always see the outline of Lilian's head bent over her work; and he watched it until he imagined himself within range of her eyes should she by any chance raise it and look out of the window, a little compartment of which she always kept open. When he entered the room, they acknowledged each other with a grave bow, but for some time the words they exchanged were very few indeed. At first, when he came after her return, she would only stay a few minutes, then fold up her work and go away, saying that, since her father had company, he could spare her earlier to Lady Leigh, who sometimes grudged her coming at all; but it was only a little

shyness of Robert that prompted the movement, for by-and-by, when she knew him better, she would stay out her full time—until seven o'clock—and occasionally even earn herself a reproof by lingering longer.

These summer evenings at the organist's house were very pleasant. It was a rather dark, low-ceiled room, but it was spacious and full of odds and ends of antique furniture quite in harmony with it, and Lilian kept it cheerful all the season through with posies of flowers, not to mention the brightness of her own presence. None of those who were used to it ever discovered that it was wanting in anything.

There is a romance, an unreality, about the dawn of boy and girl love which is very touching. Robert used to watch Lilian in the spirit of the meekest of devotees; her beauty was to his vision something angelical, so pure and maidenly and yet so bright—bright as the freshness of lilies dew-full amongst their leaves when the sun is scarcely an hour out of the east. Yet Lilian's tongue was sometimes petulant, and her smile was often mischievous when he treated her

with a reverence such as no one else ever thought of according to her girlish simplicity; and now and then she would answer him with a vivacity that was not angelical at all.

Lilian little thought how far off Robert Hawthorne seemed to see her. Her fine breeding, which showed itself in the clear, soft intonation of her voice, in all her quiet gentle movements, in every gesture and turn of her supple, facile figure, so different to the 'buxom homely charms of Dorothea Sancton, was like a cloud enshrouding a divinity. Lilian was not quite insensible to Robert's modest admiration, and most likely it pleased her, though she was shy and gave him no conscious encouragement. Nevertheless, when one heart begins to plead with another, ever so silently, ever so reverently, it will be alive to the faintest response, and, without knowing it, Lilian gave Robert many a little token such as boy-lovers treasure up like misers' gold. I think the first symptom which he accepted as wholly favourable was the nuts at St. Wilfred's fair—the nuts which Lilian would not have and then ate up from his hand and liked. It was a girlish, homely

taste, and it dissipated some of the clouds from about her idea. Thenceforward it pleased him to watch how this beautiful young creature, who seemed made for holiday times and places, gradually developed domestic qualities which belong to women rather than to angels. She had a pleasant alacrity, a sunny cheerfulness, and a quiet precision, such as are the soul of household peace, and while she was in it her father's dull old house was happier than a palace.

Dorothea Sancton used sometimes to rally her about turning into so serviceable a little person, and to declare that she had stolen a leaf out of her book; but Dorothea, nevertheless, regarded her as a mere child and had no suspicion of the silent budding of any thoughts inconsistent with samplers, embroidered shepherds, and poonah-painting; and Lilian, not being given to self-examination, never sought a morbid refreshment in confessing any tender little feelings that began to stir in her heart at this time.

They used to have a good deal of music during these meetings, for Robert was passionately fond of it, and Peter was never backward to gratify

a real enthusiast. He would go to his instrument and leave Robert sitting by the table with a volume that he rarely opened and never read, while Lilian plied her needle by the window. And, as Peter played, it was not strange that now and then the young people's eyes met as if they would have exclaimed, "How beautiful!" For Peter was a musical genius though he was poor, obscure, and unfriended. Every phrase of the great composers whose works he had studied, he interpreted with a justness, a delicate truth, a power unrivalled amongst the most distinguished organists of the day. It was no unusual thing for strangers going in to Walton Minster during service time, to carry away an impression that they had heard the anthem better given there than they had ever heard it given in any other choir in the kingdom.

Lilian had a very pretty little voice, and could sing sweetly and purely, but it was the one thing that Robert never wished her to do. Dorothea had the same feeling, though neither could have given a reasonable explanation for it; but one evening a remark of Peter's gave them a clue

to the mystery. She had been singing song after song, rather to herself than them, for she was sitting apart in the window while they were turning over huge dusty yellow piles of music, in search of some particular piece that Peter had mislaid, when he said, rather querulously,

“Oh, Lily, don’t, don’t sing any longer—your voice is so like your poor mother’s, I cannot bear it.”

Dorothea had the tears in her eyes.

“One might think it was Lucy singing here again,” said she, softly.

“I had forgotten you all,” said Lilian, with an absent air; and then, brightening up into a smile, she threw by her work, and joined in the search for the lost music.

“You sounded as if you were singing up in the clouds,” Robert remarked to her, aside.

“Sometimes I think I am two people—one here, and one I don’t know where,” was her laughing reply.

Peter glanced at her uneasily, but at the sight of the lilies and roses of her face, with the mirthful sunshine over them, his countenance cleared.

"Don't be mystical, Lily," said he, "that would be too hard upon us folks of plain understandings;" and coming across the piece he wanted, he drew it out and went to his organ.

To some people small pleasures are very precious things; indeed, I think those men and women lead the happiest lives who take the good and evil just as they come, without any long looking forward to joys they may never grasp, or to storms that may blow over and never burst. Without any philosophical intentions, Robert Hawthorne and Lilian Carlton were living their early lives thus, and if a little dream-gilding wove itself over the future of either, its far away brightness did not deaden the calm daily sunshine of the present, for they were content to follow where God and nature might lead them, step by step.

IV.

One afternoon when Robert Hawthorne was in the town upon business of the firm, he saw a

carriage drive down the Minster hill full of ladies, and with three gentlemen in attendance on horseback. They passed him rapidly, but he recognised Sir Philip Nugent, and in a slim young figure who rode beside him he was sure he saw his brother Cyrus. In the carriage were Lady Nugent, Lady Leigh, Lilian, and little Lola; the whole party took the turn from the market-place, towards the Hadley road, and were out of sight in a few minutes. Robert's face had flushed momentarily, and he walked on a little way, without being quite sure of whither he was going, but, soon recovering from his confusion, he retraced his steps, and went across the Minster yard to Peter Carlton's. Peter was just coming out on his way to the service, but he stopped to answer Robert's questions, and told him that Lilian had been in about an hour before, to bid him a hurried good-bye, previously to setting out with her patroness for Hadley Royal. Sir Philip Nugent had come down into the country rather unexpectedly, and was filling his house with company.

That brief glimpse of his brother had strangely

disturbed Robert's mind; it was almost a sickening disappointment to find that Cyrus, who was in his thoughts every hour of the day, could pass him and not know him. Nevertheless, putting himself aside with that half-ashamed feeling that attends a pain of this sort, he went about what he had to do with all his usual system, and that accomplished, he turned his steps towards Maiden Lane, with a feeling of depression and anxiety such as was almost a stranger to his temper.

Mrs. Deborah Eliotson was presiding over the tea-tray, which had just been brought in, and his uncle Joshua was looking through the columns of the *Walton Courant* in search of news, when he entered. The old man looked up at him, and said kindly—

“You don't look well this sultry weather, Robert; but I think we have got here what will set you up. Mrs. Eliotson, where is that card?”

Robert's face cleared instantaneously.

“It *was* upon the table. Betsy must have removed it when she brought in the things,” said the housekeeper, pretending to peep about

for it. "Look if she has put it upon the chimney-piece or in my work-basket."

"Your brother has been here and he left it," added Mr. Joshua, to stave off the impatience that had flashed into Robert's eyes.

The card was not found in either of the places indicated by the housekeeper, and from her expression of stealthy glee, the most probable supposition was that she had either destroyed or hidden it where it would not readily be discovered; for she had recently developed a magpieish tendency to appropriate and conceal trifling matters, which she exercised on Robert's property more than any one else's; though it was not easy for her to keep her hands off anything that she saw lying about in a casual manner. Robert saw at once that search and inquiry would be equally vain, so, after Betsy had been summoned and had denied all knowledge of the card, he resigned himself to its loss. His uncle made another effort.

"Feel in your pocket, Mrs. Eliotson; if, by any chance, you may have put it there," he suggested, mildly.

“You know I never put anything in my pocket, sir,” replied she, with a tartness which convinced Robert that his brother’s card was lurking in the depths of that treacherous receptacle at that very moment.

“Cyrus was vastly disappointed not to see you, and I think he wrote on the card when he should come into the town again. I wish I had observed it,” said Mr. Joshua.

Robert commenced his tea in patience; he had resolved that when Pussy fell asleep after tea he would pick her guilty pocket of his own property, nefarious as such a transaction might appear under other circumstances.

“I had the honour of speaking to Mr. Cyrus,” by-and-by said the housekeeper, blandly; “and he seemed to me to have grown into a very fine and distinguished-looking young gentleman indeed; only rather too haughty for his place, which is a pity, for we are told that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, and none of us would like to see him so humbled.”

Neither Robert nor his uncle made any re-

sponse to this pious observation, which apparently chafed the deliverer, for she became rather impetuous in her way of handling the crockery, and, as a climax, upset a cup of tea, which she was about to hand to Robert; in ostentatious haste she wafted out her handkerchief to stay the flood until Betsy could arrive, and, in so doing, jerked Cyrus's card from her pocket upon the carpet. With boyish vivacity, Robert was down upon it in an instant, and only just in time, for if Pussy's movements were stealthy, on occasions also they were swift. Her hand came in contact with his upon the floor, and Robert raised his face red and laughing and triumphant, for though he had received a slight scratch, he had secured the card. For some minutes after the scurry the housekeeper appeared bewildered and vacant, but she soon recovered, and went on exactly as if nothing had happened.

"So sorry you were not in, dear Robin," the card said, "for I cannot come into Walton again till Sunday. We are at Hadley for a month and must meet often——" There was an attempt at something more which had been given up, because,

as Mrs. Eliotson explained, Cyrus's horse was fidgety and would not stand to let him write further, so he threw her the card, and rode off.

"He will come on Sunday—is that a leisure day amongst great folks as well as small?" said Mr. Joshua Hawthorne.

Robert did not much care what it was so long as his brother came to see him, and all the rest of the week he lived in a state of the happiest anticipation. But on Sunday, instead of Cyrus in person, there came only a messenger with a letter—a most disappointing substitute.

Cyrus did not mean to be unkind: he did not mean to slight Robert or to be selfish, but, the fact was, this meeting did not seem so great an event to him as to his brother, and he betrayed it. He said in his letter that there was company at Hadley which he did not like to lose, and he would come on the following day. Robert wondered what company in the world would have tempted him to forego the sight of Cyrus even for an hour! Mrs. Eliotson remarked with a too visible satisfaction that she feared Cyrus had grown rather too fine for such humble folk as they were in Maiden Lane,

but Robert would not hearken to that, he was sure he would come on the Monday.

But on the Monday something else intervened, and again and again, until Robert's heart ached with disappointment. When he appeared, at last, it was with warm affection and overflowing excuses; but Cyrus's brother was never the one to reproach him, and he did not reproach him now. Cyrus never perceived how he had been hurt, and, fancying that "dear old Robin" would bear with anything, he neglected him more than was quite kind or brotherly.

We must accept in his excuse the plea Robert accepted—there was *somebody* at Hadley Royal whom he could not bear to leave. Robert could sympathize with him in some degree. The evenings at Peter Carlton's seemed very strange, and long, and dull, since Lilian went away.

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